

BEE... NAINI TAL

Rev. G. A. Premier

St. Nicholas N. S. L.





# S M A R A N D A



Works by the same Author



OLD EUROPE'S SUICIDE  
AIR FACTS AND PROBLEMS  
VICTORS AND VANQUISHED

# SMARANDA

A Compilation in Three Parts

by

C. B. THOMSON

(Lord Thomson of Cardington)



With an Introduction by the  
Rt. Hon. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

London  
JONATHAN CAPE,  
THIRTY BEDFORD SQUARE  
1931

FIRST PUBLISHED IN MCMXXVI  
NEW EDITION WITH INTRODUCTION  
MCMXXXI

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
PHOTOTYPE LIMITED AND BOUND BY  
A. W. BAIN & CO. LTD. PAPER MADE BY  
JOHN DICKINSON AND CO. LTD.

# *Contents*

INTRODUCTION BY J. RAMSAY MACDONALD	PAGE vii
COMPILER'S PREFACE	xxxviii

PART ONE	
<i>THE DIARY OF BRIG-GENERAL Y—</i>	ii

PART TWO	
<i>SEVEN SKETCHES</i>	
TU-WHIT, TU-WHO	134
THE KEYS OF JERUSALEM	143
CONSTANTINOPLE	152
DWELLERS IN MEAN STREETS	160
A PERA NIGHT-CLUB	167
A LOST LEADER	175
WIZARDS, DIPLOMATISTS, AND PIGS	190

PART THREE	
<i>A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE</i>	

CHAP.	
I THE BACKGROUND	204
II THE FARM	208
III THE VILLAGE OF THE TOMB	215
IV PAPOULOS THE GREEK	220
V THE QUARRIES	229
VI THE CAVE	236
VII THE PALACE BY THE SEA	249
VIII VENGEANCE	269
IX JOHN AND SALOMÉ	279
X THE HOSPICE	284
COMPILER'S NOTE	288

# MUNICIPAL LIBRARY

NAINI TAL.

*Class*.....

*Sub-head*.....

*Serial No.*.....*Almirah No.*.....

*Received on*.....

## *Introduction*

AMONGST those who met death by the disaster which befell R 101 on the morning of Sunday, 5th October 1930, was a gallant gentleman who loved life but who nevertheless rigidly controlled its pleasures by duty – Lord Thomson, who wrote this book. He was a soldier in his bearing and his conduct; he did his work with the devotion of one who withheld nothing from public service. Never slack or dishevelled in his bearing, in his most thoughtless moments one was not allowed to forget the serious man of rectitude and honour which was behind; his delightful intimacies, his happy humour, his buoyant conversation were always those of one who was for the time being ‘out of school.’ Thus it was that the hours passed in friendly companionship with him, were hours with a deep-rooted man at play, gay and spontaneous, revelling in everything which charmed and enlivened life from last evening’s feast of music to the lunch or dinner gossip of a very human party, but ready at a moment to pull himself up to the salute and bend his mind to serious affairs. He was, in short, that most enticing of human combinations, a soldier in his upbringing and discipline, and an artist in his sensibilities and the values he put on the things of life.

When he paid me his last visit the day before he left, we discussed the risks he ran. He had set his heart on the venture. It was the right thing for him to do. He believed in the ship. It was his child. He had

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

watched it grow. How could he stay at home whilst it went on its way to attainment? In a letter he wrote to a confidential friend abroad, one of the last he ever finished, he said:

'R 100 gave me pleasure. R 101 will I hope give me joy. To ride the storm has always been my ambition, and who knows but we may realize it on the way to India, but not, I hope, with undue risk to human life.'

I asked if the recent alterations made in the ship had been good. He was confident. Feeling I was doubtful, he chaffed me about my desire to cross the Atlantic on R 100, and said I was the last man on earth to hold him back. Then more seriously: 'You know I have never let you down. I shall not do it now. I shall meet you here on the twentieth.' Later, as he descended the stairs and I leant over the balustrade at the top to see the last of him, he stopped and called up in lightsome words that if the worst came it would soon be over, and that the Fate of all of us was written. Looking back now and seeing the currents which had gathered down different channels to carry him with a surety to his end, it seems almost as though it had all been written at his birth. Events are so unbroken in their sequences.

He had promised to send me two messages a day, one in the morning to tell me how he had spent the night, the other in the evening to say how he had spent the day. In the very early hours of that Sunday I lay in

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

bed reading. My telephone bell rang. With glad heart I answered, but the news was not from, but of, him. I was told that, an hour or two before, the R 101 had crashed and that my friend was dead.

★

Christopher Birdwood Thomson was born on April 13, 1875, at Nasik in the Bombay Presidency. He came of a fighting stock on both sides, being the third son of Major-General Thomson of the Royal Engineers and Emily, daughter of General Christopher Birdwood of the Indian Army, through whom he was related to Field-Marshal Sir William Birdwood, the late Commander-in-Chief in India. His paternal grandfather was General Harry Thomson, an old Indian veteran, who, sailing to India in the closing years of the eighteenth century, was commissioned in the 6th Bengal Light Cavalry and fought in many engagements under Lord Lake. His great-grandfather, the younger son of a line of Scottish lairds established in Clackmannanshire since 1609, was a naval officer. His Scottish ancestry has sometimes been questioned, but his pedigree is quite clear.

He was brought back from India to England in 1876 and his childhood was spent first at Pucklechurch, near Mangotsfield, in Gloucestershire, and subsequently at St. Andrews and Cheltenham, where his father had built a house. In the family purposes he was from the first destined for the Army and to be, for choice, a sapper like his father before him. He entered Cheltenham College as a day boy in September 1888 at the



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

age of 13, and spent just over three years there before passing 19th into Woolwich in December 1891. Even as a boy he was imaginative and thoughtful above the average and endowed with the high spirits and generous and eager temper so characteristic of him in later years, but his career at Cheltenham was in the main unremarkable. He was most successful in modern languages, attaining a higher place in French and German than in his general studies – an early indication of the direction in which his future tastes were to lie. French was his favourite subject and he spoke it fluently by the time he left Cheltenham. A love for French ways and literature was to remain with him all his life. He was a great reader, his favourite authors in these early days being Bulwer Lytton and Matthew Arnold – the strange combination which was the man.

Having entered Woolwich when just under 17, he was gazetted to a commission in the Royal Engineers in March 1894. Within two years he had his first taste of campaigning in the Mashonaland operations of 1896. Three years later, in 1899, he was again on active service in South Africa. In the course of the war he saw much fighting and acquired a varied practical experience which stood him in good stead in later years. He was present at the actions of Lydenberg, Mlanda River, Lindley and Rhenoster River, received the Queen's Medal with three clasps and the King's Medal with two clasps, was mentioned in despatches, and, though still a subaltern, received the much-coveted distinction of a brevet majority, to take effect on his

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

promotion to captain. This last he owed to Sir Horace Smith-Dorrien's recommendation, and it earned for him the proud description of the 'youngest major in the Army.' Smith-Dorrien, who thought very highly of him, took a keen interest in his subsequent career, and Thomson always entertained a warm regard and admiration for one whom he looked upon as his first sponsor. During the advance on Kimberley, he also came under the personal notice of Lord Kitchener, who commended him for the resource and forcefulness with which he cleared a serious block on the railway, which was endangering the relief operations. His three years in South Africa left a very vivid impression on his plastic mind; though still in his twenties he felt profoundly the sufferings which war inevitably imposes on non-combatants and his ever-ready sympathies were kindled time and again on behalf of the Boer women and children, on whom the protracted fighting of necessity bore hardly. Readers of *Smaranda* will note the moving picture he paints of the burning of a Boer farm used by the enemy as a store for arms and ammunition.

When he left South Africa in 1902, the good work he had done there earned for him a post on the instructional staff at the School of Military Engineering at Chatham, where he was for the next three years. It was here he first began to master the unmilitary art of public speaking. A few years of normal peace-time soldiering followed with an interlude in West Africa, in 1906 and 1907, until in 1909 he proceeded to the

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Staff College, where he greatly enhanced a growing reputation as a keen and original thinker, an excellent and humorous speaker, and the wielder of a fluent and sharp-pointed pen. He became a popular figure at Camberley, for he was his life long far from being one —

‘Who wit with jealous eyes surveys  
And sickens at another’s praise.’

Part of his popularity consisted in the fact that in these wordy battles he enjoyed with impartial appreciation his discomfiture just as much as his triumph. He also earned the warm regard of the Commandant, Sir Henry Wilson, since he possessed just those qualities likely to commend him to that clever, witty, and wayward soldier. On several occasions in after years, Wilson’s interest was enlisted on his behalf, but those who regard his former Commandant as having been the dominant influence in Thomson’s subsequent advance do not allow sufficiently for his own force of character and the strength of his native powers. During his time at the Staff College his outlook underwent a rapid broadening, an evidence of this being a growing interest in the world at large outside his profession. Life, literature and politics began to loom larger in his landscape. In October 1911 he joined the Directorate of Operations, of which Wilson was then in charge, at the War Office, for intelligence duties as a General Staff Officer 3rd Grade, and whilst holding this appointment he was, in the autumn of 1912, detailed to serve

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

as temporary Military Attaché with the Servian forces. In this way he made his first acquaintance with the Near East and the Balkan peoples, who were to establish such an enduring hold upon him – as the pages of *Smaranda* bear witness. He continued in this capacity throughout the Turkish and subsequent Bulgarian campaigns, resuming his duties at the War Office as a General Staff Officer 2nd Grade in August 1913. Here it was that the outbreak of the Great War found him.

He proceeded to France in August 1914 on the Headquarters Staff of the Expeditionary Force. After short periods as liaison officer and with Belgian Headquarters, he was appointed to the staff of Haig's 1st Army Corps. However, differences of opinion with Haig's Chief of Staff, a soldier of repute but of a mind as stubborn and conservative as Thomson's was supple and progressive, soon led to an inevitable clash of temperaments which brought about his return to French's Headquarters. In February 1915 he was called to a new duty for which, in view of his pre-war experience and knowledge of Near Eastern politics and peoples, he had very special qualifications, and was sent to Rumania, first as Military Attaché and subsequently as head of the British Mission. The two years he spent in Rumania were a turning-point in his career. He found himself in surroundings in which his rich endowment of tact and diplomacy, personal charm, and cosmopolitan culture at last found full scope, and he met in with friends who drew out from him his finest

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

qualities as a sensitive human being. He understood the Rumanians — he regarded Rumania as 'a Latin island in a sea of Magyars and Slavs,' with an aristocracy whose 'spiritual home is France' — as very few Englishmen could have done. Sensible of their weaknesses, he found in them qualities and graces which made an overwhelming appeal to his own cultured and subtle intelligence. He became imbued with a warm affection for the country — a 'land of romance' he styles it — and its inhabitants, and the liking was genuinely returned. In consequence, as Sir Samuel Hoare has recently testified in *The Fourth Seal*, he made a host of friends throughout the aristocratic and political society of the Rumanian capital. As time passed, he inspired a degree of trust and acquired an influence which were to prove an effective counter to the persistent and ubiquitous intrigues of the agents of the Central Powers and to play an important — if not indeed a predominant — part in bringing Rumania at last into the war on the side of the Allies. His book tells so fully of his life in Rumania under the thinly veiled disguise of 'Smarandaland' that there is no need to embroider the story. He felt strongly that the Rumanian entry into the war was ill-timed; but, having made his protest fearlessly — he visited London for that especial purpose — and with all the force at his command, regardless of the odium which he incurred thereby with his military superiors, he loyally, if sorrowfully, performed what he conceived to be his duty to that country and his own. He writes, 'I felt like a hired assassin.' The subsequent

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

tragic débâcle proved his judgment sound, as Mr. Lloyd George admitted during a reference to his death in the House of Commons. 'Had his advice been accepted,' he said, speaking with first-hand knowledge as War Minister of the day, 'on the information which he gave us, which was very sound and thorough, although very ruthless, a very considerable tragedy might have been averted.' The 'ruthlessness' consisted in the fact that he faced realities and neither gambled nor dreamed. It is a curious coincidence that he who was after the war to take so prominent a part in airship development, and ultimately lose his life in the R 101, very nearly met his death in Rumania from a bomb dropped by a German Zeppelin which partially destroyed the house in Bukharest in which he was living. The regard in which the Rumanians held him is shown by the decision of the Bukharest municipal authorities to commemorate his services to the country by naming after him a street in its capital. Whilst no pacifist, he was much moved, as he had been in South Africa, by the hardships war entails for the civil population of territory overrun by invading forces, and on this occasion he felt them the more keenly owing to the part which duty had constrained him to play in bringing Rumania into the fighting. Watching the sufferings of the Rumanian peasants, he became more and more impressed with the futility of war and the evil it drags in its train. He reached a frame of mind in which he would have echoed Dr. Johnson's singularly apt lines in *The Vanity of Human Wishes*:

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

'The festal blazes, the triumphal show,  
 The ravished standard and the captive foe,  
 The senate's thanks, the gazette's pompous tale  
 With force resistless o'er the brave prevail.  
 Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd . . .  
 For such in distant lands the Britons shine  
 And stain with blood the Danube or the Rhine . . .  
 Yet reason frowns on War's unequal game . . .  
 And mortgag'd States their grandsires' wreaths regret  
 From age to age in everlasting debt . . .'

One other episode in his Rumanian experiences deserves special mention, and that is his meeting with Princess Marthe Bibesco, a gracious and charming personality, a gifted connoisseur of art and scholarship and an accomplished authoress, whose books have been crowned by the French Academy. Thomson formed an intimate and lasting friendship with the Bibesco family, and this cultured circle did much to encourage his taste for art and literature and to induce him to venture, despite some initial discouragement, on the pleasures and pangs of authorship. *Smaranda* is his tribute to this friendship.

Whilst holding his Rumanian appointment he paid several visits to Russia. In May 1915 he was at Russian General Headquarters; he was in Petrograd in June 1915 *en route* for England, and in January 1917 he was again ordered there to attend an Inter-Allied Conference, when he was profoundly impressed with the inevitableness of the impending Russian tragedy. On

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

this occasion he also visited Moscow, finding Lenin there, and 'very active.' In June 1917 he was finally recalled to London, and once more travelled *via* Petrograd.

On his return to England he spent a short time at the War Office and was then ordered to Palestine as C.R.E. to the 60th Division. He took part in the advance which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem and was given the temporary command of an infantry brigade. He laments in *Smaranda* the casualties to his men in the course of the capture of Jericho. For these services he received the D.S.O. In after years he retained a lively recollection of the terrain over which he had marched and fought, and in 1924, when he visited Palestine by air, he traced the scene of the 1917 operations with keen interest. In April 1918 he was recalled to serve at Versailles on the staff of the Supreme War Council with the rank of Brigadier-General under his old chief, Sir Henry Wilson, and there he remained (except for a brief mission to Mudros and Salonika in October and November 1918) until the late summer of 1919. Readers of this book will find some pungent comments on the handicaps under which he saw the Supreme War Council labouring. Much of the work of the subsequent Peace Conference he viewed with profound misgiving and he never concealed his censure on those responsible. If he took what pleasure he could from the gay and cosmopolitan society which thronged Paris at that time, those who worked with him know the volume and value of his



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

contributions to the deliberations of the Council. His special knowledge and experience were frequently drawn on, if his views were all too often in the event overruled by the exigencies of *la haute politique*, and his services were rewarded with the C.B.E.

It was at this time that he took the fateful decision to throw up the career for which he had been destined and in which the best years of his life had been spent with such distinction, and to venture boldly into the uncertain sea of politics. The decision was typical of one who thought with a greater Scotsman that —

‘He either fears his fate too much  
Or his deserts are small  
That dares not put it to the touch  
To gain or lose it all.’

The way through the soldier's life had crossed the frontier of politics, and he pursued it. It needed a rare courage for a man of forty-four with negligible private means and a mere pittance of a pension thus to leave the profession which had been his for twenty-eight years and enter a sphere of activity of which he had no experience, and in which he had no influence — especially as he was to enlist in the ranks of a party whose creed and personnel were anathema in those circles in which he had hitherto moved. ‘Thomson,’ as I know some of his friends remarked in their surprise, ‘has too much brains to act as an ordinary soldier is expected to act.’ I have thought of Montrose and his ventures. There were, indeed, in Thomson's make-up not a few of the

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

qualities which have so endeared the name of James Graham to succeeding generations of Scotsmen: courage, charm, debonair grace, and a native authority tempered withal by the power to win the fullest measure of service, loyalty and affection from his companions and subordinates.

From the ease and luxury of Paris and the good company of his Army friends, he passed to simple lodgings, plain fare, and laborious days at Bristol, where he became candidate, eking out his pension by precarious journalism — not yet were the days of his American successes — but finding ample recompense for all that he had surrendered in the warm affection of his new-found friends of the Labour Party. For if at first he was regarded with rather surprised eyes, as the working bees might look askance at a brightly-painted butterfly which fluttered into their ken expressing the desire to throw in its lot with the sober-hued and busy people of the hive, his warm human sympathy and his faculty for comradeship, his instinctive urge to champion the cause of the weak and oppressed — whether individuals or nations — and his simple sincerity were soon appreciated at their true worth. He did not speak their familiar language, but his personality soon made that all right.

Lord Thomson's politics were unclouded by philosophic doubts and unalloyed by personal push or ambition. He believed and he served. He wrote to a friend last September that the universality of distress and dislocation of these days showed that 'there is

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

something radically wrong in the way we make wealth and distribute it.' He was a Socialist drawing his inspiration from the condition of the masses in every country (which he always called with a note of deep sympathy in his voice 'the poor bottom dog'); and his intelligence made him look forward to organization in the common interest which would not only be national but international, because he knew that the day of purely national economics were over. He saw the difficulties ahead and had very little sympathy with the merely emotional Socialist who contented himself by criticisms of friend and foe alike—a criticism of no constructive value amounting to nothing but highly coloured descriptions of existing conditions. He was out to cure not merely to describe; and he knew that cures took time and that their magnitude called for a brain power and a devotion to the study of public service which he often said were not yet at our command. He had built up no elaborate theories of Socialism; he was a practical man with an eye to see, a heart to feel and a head to be satisfied only by hard, practical work.

From that day until his death he gave an unswerving allegiance to his Party and his chiefs. He went to Ireland in 1920 in connection with the Labour investigation into the rebellion and its handling. In September of the same year was published his first complete book, *Old Europe's Suicide*, with its characteristic sub-title *The Building of a Pyramid of Errors: An Account of Certain Events in Europe during the period*

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

1912-1919. In 1921 he was appointed by the International Committee of the Red Cross at Geneva as Special Commissioner for inquiries into the condition of refugees in Europe and the Near East. He also joined the Executive Committee of the 'Save the Children Fund' and subsequently became one of its Vice-Presidents. For this Fund he did much useful work, including a visit to Moscow, in the course of which he saw a good deal of Trotsky and his fellow Bolsheviks. Nothing, indeed, stirred his compassion more warmly than the pitiable condition of the children of the defeated nations after the war, and, as one who looked to the rising generation to set right much that was (and alas still is) amiss with the body politic, he set great store on a movement which aimed at the physical and mental betterment of children the world over. 'The Future of the World,' he wrote, 'lies in the hands of its children. . . . If we are wise, we shall see to it that their education—in the widest sense of the word—is not stinted.' In 1922 he contested Central Bristol, and again, in 1923, St. Albans. On both occasions, though he made a host of friends in the constituencies, he was not successful. They were, indeed, hopeless places. In 1923 he went with a Labour Party deputation to the Ruhr. Life was none too easy for him at this period; he was not always free from the handicap of straitened finances and many of his old friends looked askance at his new activities and turned a cold shoulder to him. But he never repined and remained indomitably cheerful, leading a

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

full life and combining literary and journalistic work with an intensive study of politics and much platform activity. It was at this time that he wrote *Victor and Vanquished: the New Balance of Power in Central and South-Eastern Europe*, which was published in April 1924.

More and more those at the head of the party came to realize the value of their new adherent; closer and closer they were drawn to him by his delightful personality. And so it happened that when the first Labour Government was formed in 1924, he was made a member of the Cabinet with the office of Secretary of State for Air, sworn of the Privy Council and elevated to the Peerage, taking the title of Baron Thomson of Cardington, where the Royal Airship Works are located. Already he was intensely interested in the possibilities of airship development. The appointment was a surprise. He was one of the dark horses, but he soon justified the trust reposed in him. At the Air Ministry, as the head of the newest of the fighting services, a service instinct with youth and vital energy, whose personnel of all ranks looked forward to new fields of achievement rather than backward to achievements won, Thomson found a task with almost infinite scope for constructive imagination which was greatly to his taste, and for which his peculiar talents rendered him eminently fitted. Lord Trenchard has recently paid public testimony to the interest—nay enthusiasm—with which he set himself to master the far from simple technique of the air,

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

and he spoke of himself, in his maiden speech in the House of Lords on the 4th March 1924, as having 'inherited an enthralling task.'

It was his pride and ambition to familiarize himself so far as possible with the whole field of air development. In this country he paid a series of visits to different types of unit, and in September 1924 he proceeded on a tour of inspection by air to Egypt, Palestine, Trans-Jordan, and Iraq, but home politics compelled him to return to London within three weeks of his departure.

He arrived in Iraq at a time when Turkish troops were threatening, and had, indeed, actually crossed, the frontier. It was typical of him that he immediately visited with the Air Officer Commanding the scene of action among the mountains of the extreme north-west, flying in an ordinary open military machine. In the course of this flight a flying wire broke in his machine. A friend recalls the calm with which he treated this mishap, and his indifference to danger made a deep impression on those who accompanied him.

But perhaps the most characteristic feature of his administration was the scheme of airship development for which he was so largely responsible. He had a profound belief in the future of lighter-than air craft and saw in them a means of communication which, if they could be successfully developed, would prove of incalculable value to an Empire scattered over the Seven Seas, and subject more than any other nation

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

to the barriers of time and distance. But he never attempted to conceal that the airship programme was a great *experiment* – indeed, in countless public speeches he emphasized this point – whilst holding that the comparatively large expenditure incurred was abundantly justified, whatever the issue. There had been in his view – and those acquainted with the facts know that this is undeniably true – too much wavering in the past with airship development. What he felt to be essential was that airships should for the first time be given an exhaustive trial by means of a comprehensive and carefully planned programme, until their possibilities should be proved or disproved beyond all reasonable doubt.

In the House of Lords, as time passed, he proved himself an effective and acute debater with a happy turn of phrase and an ability to develop a logical and compelling argument. He was, indeed, a very definite accession of strength to the Labour Party in a second Chamber in which it has hitherto inevitably fought its battles under the handicap of numerical and other weakness, though it was in his second term of office in 1929 that, with ripening experience, his powers in debate reached their full development.

On relinquishing office after the General Election of 1924, Thomson soon showed that his interest in the air was far from being the passing care of a politician placed by chance in charge of a Department. He associated himself with organizations such as the Air League, the Royal Aeronautical Society, and the

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Royal Aero Club; in particular, he did invaluable work as Chairman of the last-mentioned organization. He also resumed his literary and journalistic activities, writing numerous articles on aviation both military and civil, particularly in the American press. He further undertook an extended lecturing tour in the United States, where his qualities as a lecturer, going hand in hand with obvious knowledge, made a profound impression on his audiences and added largely to his already wide circle of friends. It has been written of him by an ardent American admirer that in Pittsburgh and Chicago he had 'become a legend of delight.'

Apart from his absences abroad he was active in attendance in the Lords and made important contributions to debates on a large variety of subjects. He concentrated in particular on defence questions. In March 1926, for example, he initiated a debate on air policy and brought to light the fact that the Colwyn Committee (Lords Colwyn, Chalmers and Bradbury), which had made in the preceding winter, in the course of a detailed survey of defence expenditure, an exhaustive investigation into the case for a separate Air Ministry and Air Force, had found decisively in favour of the retention of the existing British system, alike on grounds of economy and efficiency. He also revealed by a series of telling quotations from the report of a Congressional Committee the chaos, extravagance and waste prevailing at that time in the United States with a system of dual Army and Navy air services. Again in June of



## I N T R O D U C T I O N

the same year he brought forward a Motion on National Defence, and in a speech, packed with intimate knowledge, elaborated the overwhelming practical difficulties which stand in the way of the creation of a single Ministry of Defence, despite its superficial plausibility.

In 1926 he published *Smaranda*, which was his most cherished literary production and the fruit of several years' work and reflection, in the course of which many passages had been rewritten again and again. In it he revealed himself and confessed to his love of Rumania. A friend who travelled with him to the East in 1924 tells how he worked by the hour at his manuscript in the cabin of the Lloyd-Triestino steamer by which he crossed the Mediterranean — luncheon sometimes finding him with but a page written since breakfast, if inspiration lagged, and that scored across with innumerable corrections; whilst at other times his pen would travel with smooth and facile rapidity. It is by this book that he would have wished to be judged as an author, and readers will find in it the very essence of the man and a candid confession of his hopes, beliefs and emotions, and a record of experiences which played so large a part in making him what he had become. He was wont to inscribe the copies he presented to his friends 'From the ghost of General Y—'—the ghost of the dead Thomson. In 1927 he collected the material of his press articles and lectures on aviation and, after incorporating much additional material, published an in-

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

formative little book with the title *Air Facts and Problems*, in which prominence was given to his faith in the future of airships.

In the winter of 1928 he was again in America as official emissary of the Air Ministry to an important International Air Conference. In a gathering of leading air representatives from the principal nations of the world, he was one of the outstanding and, indeed, the most prominent figure.

With the return of the Labour Party to office in the summer of 1929, he was again appointed to be Secretary of State for Air as of natural right. He was glad to be once again in control at the Air Ministry. During his time out of office, his conviction had strengthened that air power is destined to mean as much to the British Commonwealth of Nations as ever sea power has meant in the past. His head was full of knowledge and his heart was in his work.

Outside the Air Ministry he rendered great service in a variety of directions. He proved a highly competent member (and was, on occasion, Chairman) of a number of the Committees on questions of defence and foreign and Colonial policy, whose preliminary spade-work is so essential to the increasingly complex machinery of Government. In the House of Lords, too, he took a more prominent part in debate than during his first term of office, and spoke with a growing authority. All sections of the House gave him a ready hearing, and, as he grew ever more familiar with and attuned to the atmosphere of the red benches, his

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

dialectical skill and capacity for courteous but cogent argument became increasingly valuable assets to the Government. His speeches covered a wide field – from British policy in Egypt to Naval Affairs, from National Economy to the Coal Mines Bill. He was steadily rising to leadership. When the House adjourned for the summer recess he took immediate advantage of his increased liberty to pay further visits to Royal Air Force stations at home, and gave still closer attention to the plans now maturing for his flight to India in the R 101, which it was desired should coincide with the Imperial Conference. He had the most absolute faith in the R 101, and in the scientific knowledge and technical skill of all those responsible for her design, construction and operation. It was thus in the fullest confidence that in the dusk of an autumn evening, October 4th, the little band of pioneers, with himself at its head, set off on their adventurous journey. Of the cruel mischance which overtook the great airship at Beauvais there is no need to write, for the details of the disaster are fresh in the public mind. ‘Per ardua ad astra’ – the beautiful and appropriate motto of the service which Thomson loved so well – once again showed its tragic implication. Not without sacrifice did past generations make their conquest of the wide oceans; the vaster and still uncharted spaces of the air have likewise demanded their toll – and seldom has a heavier price been paid for human progress onward and upward than on that October morning of rain and storm in Northern France. So in the early hours of

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

Sunday, October 5th, 1930, his life closed when his years were but 55 and at the very height of his powers and his promise. Yet he had warmed both hands before the fire of life and his friends know that in so dying he would have no grievance against his fate.

★

Such are the main events of his life – a life of unusual course and surprising turnings. In appearance he was a tall, slim, graceful figure with a dandy stoop – well cast for the part of the ‘beau sabreur’ of Romance – with a handsome and expressive countenance, an unusual charm of manner and a ready smile which disarmed the sourest being who met him in the flesh. He had the slender, tapering fingers of the artist – a true indication of his character, for he had an absorbing passion for beauty in every form, for fine pictures, for fine books and, above all, for fine music and fine embodiments of his fellow beings. When out of sorts mentally or physically, if he could get away for an afternoon to some concert or recital, he would return refreshed to his work. Readers of this book will find occasional mention of some of his favourites – of ‘Tristan and Isolde,’ for example, and of Tchaikovsky’s Concerto in B Flat Minor, this last heard in melancholy and incongruous circumstances. The serious Thomson was a precious companion. He had the fundamental stuff of true religion in him – both its awe and its reverence, its hope and its devotion. The purest refined gold of the spirit rung in him, when, for instance, he would

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

begin to expatiate on what the hymn, 'The Pilgrims of the Night,' meant to him.

Of books he was an ardent connoisseur, with markedly individual tastes and an exacting standard. He read and re-read the works of Anatole France, and one who afterwards became a close friend but knew nothing of him when he first came to the Air Ministry was at once surprised and delighted to find a casual reference on his part to one of the most memorable phrases from that little masterpiece *Le Procureur de Judée* promptly capped by Thomson with an unflinching quotation of a whole page from *Thais*. His reading was catholic, if unsystematic, and he made a habit of learning by heart his favourite passages from sources as wide apart as seventeenth-century English poetry, such as Sir Henry Wotton's exquisite verses on his mistress, the Queen of Bohemia, and nineteenth-century French prose, such as the writings of Ernest Renan. He had a wonderful literary memory and commanded every one of its innumerable pigeon-holes.

At the back of his mind he had literary ambitions and took the practice of authorship very seriously and never shrank from applying to his own writings in full measure that *limæ labor* inculcated by Horace. Withal he was singularly modest about his own talents, witness the opening sentence of the preface to *Smaranda*, where he characteristically and ruefully but seriously raises a smile at his own expense by alluding to criticism passed on the 'purple patches' of one of his earlier books. A friend once suggested an alternative to one of his sen-

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

tences. 'How do you get that effect?' he asked. 'It lives.' When the friend replied by quoting from William Watson: 'Go ask the lily wherefore is it white,' he said sadly, 'That is the worst of it.' As he confesses, he 'dearly loved a phrase.' In what he chose to consider more learned society he was wont quite unaffectedly and, I think, quite unnecessarily, to lament that, like the vast majority of soldiers, he had inevitably forgone the advantages of a University education, and to brood upon Sir Philip Sidney's -

'I never drank of Aganippe well,  
Nor ever did in vale of Tempe sit,  
And Muses scorn with vulgar brains to dwell,  
Poor layman I, for sacred rites unfit.'

The Muses, one may feel confident, have passed a kindlier judgment upon him, and it is a real loss that the further book, which he had been meditating for some years against a time when he should be able to free himself from the drudgery of public affairs, and which would have contained the concentrated essence of his more critical judgment and ripened experience, will never now see the light.

He was a master in conversation and was at his best at an intimate gathering of friends, whom he would interest for hours with an effortless run of reminiscences culled from his experiences in many lands, one thing leading smoothly to another, the flow gliding in sunny ripples and delightful swirls. Or he would begin musings aloud on life, private and public, and draw up to

the surface from the deep wells of his enjoyment drafts of refreshing comments and views on things and persons in politics, literature, the arts, or revel in those alluring moods of frank gossip and sparkling superficiality – the mellow wine of conversation, delicate in bouquet and dainty in flavour. He disliked those who

‘Fetch their precepts from the cynic tub  
Praising the lean and sallow Abstinence.’

He was human, lovably human, and embraced the weaknesses of the mind and the body in his instincts of gentlemanly honour and rectitude. He never let anyone down, and as regards the ‘eternal verities’ he was as dependable as the compass, but he trusted to no formula or creed but to a discriminating instinct of uprightness. He appreciated all the good things of the physical world, amongst the rest, good wine and good food, of which he could and did claim to be a connoisseur. ‘I made a good impression on my new chief,’ he writes in *Smaranda*, ‘by knowing the brand and vintage of his Champagne without having seen the label.’ But always he would want his friends – even his acquaintances – to share his satisfactions with him, and, if he could have remodelled the world, it would not have been by way of destroying these amenities, but rather by way of bringing them within the reach of everyone. He had, indeed, an abounding generosity; money, time and trouble he would gladly lavish on anyone who had the smallest claim upon him. This generosity came

## I N T R O D U C T I O N

from his own hand and was not formal. His last act before the R 101 left the mast at Cardington on her fateful journey was to sit down amid all the bustle and distraction of departure and make time to write, in his fine pointed hand, a letter of sympathy and encouragement to a friend on a sick-bed, who was to receive it – a veritable voice from the dead – some days after the disaster. He was kind-hearted to a degree, and of the many who on one pretext or another appealed to him in the days of his prosperity, none were sent away empty-handed, old soldiers in particular being always sure of a warm welcome.

He had the magic of attractiveness; he had what is called 'a magnetic personality.' Women were devoted to him. One of his friends asked me after his death to what century I assigned him. She thought he was a knight of the thirteenth, reborn in these harder and more formal days. Haply, we need no such explanation of him. He was of our own time, unmoved by its gross materialist and superficial purposes and appetites, transmuting the physical into qualities, endowed with grace of mind and of body, reverent to everything of beauty and responsive to whatever gives zest to life. If the higher peaks of the senses rose above the plateau where he had his dwelling-place, in that atmosphere they lost their aspects of the gross and became part of the catholic life of his spirit – a happy and graceful, yet serious and sober humanity.

A sympathy for the under-dog and a desire to better his lot were characteristic of him from his earliest days,



and led him naturally to ally himself to the Labour Party. Not for him the rôle of 'the cynics to whom' (in the words of the sketch "Tu-whit, 'Tu-who' in this volume) 'a distraught world is just a spectacle.' He, like everybody else placed similarly, was not wanting in detractors who ascribed his choice of a political creed to motives of self-seeking ambition. Honourably and justifiably ambitious he was, but those who had known him since he was a young subaltern of sappers testified to the fact that his sympathies had lain from the first in the same direction. He could never look on, calmly acquiescent —

'... whilst man doth ransack man,  
And builds on blood, and rises by distress;  
And th' inheritance of desolation leaves . . .'

as old Samuel Daniel wrote three centuries and more ago. His career and his interests were a united living whole, moving from circumstance to circumstance.

Like all really human spontaneous men he could not conceal the defects of his qualities. A warm heart is generally matched by a hot temper. Then, he was a splendid spectacle. But if, when he had cooled down, he thought, on reflection, that it was himself who was at fault, he made such spontaneous and handsome amends that he drew still closer the bonds of friendship. He did not suffer fools gladly. But for the most part it was pretentious stupidity that would provoke him to an impatient outburst. No one could ordinarily have been more considerate and patient with those

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

whose brains found difficulty in keeping pace with his own and did not attempt to disguise the fact; it was the ass in the lion's skin or the fool in the philosopher's tub who roused his anger and contempt.

'Of pregnant parts and quick inventive brain,' he was interested in almost every manifestation of human activity, and retained in middle age all the intellectual freshness and curiosity of youth. He had, indeed, the perennial youth of heart of Johnson, who claimed that at sixty-eight he had no more 'of the old man in his conversation than at twenty-eight.' Thomson laughed to scorn Boswell's prim censure of this quality. It was partly to this insatiable thirst for fresh knowledge and new experiences that he owed his immense adaptability, which made him immediately welcome in every company and in every team. He was equally at ease (and what is more important set his company equally at ease) whether talking with one of his peers in the House of Lords or the young valet who met his death with him in the R 101. Here, too, the Johnsonian will trace a resemblance to his hero, for Boswell has placed it on record that it was his friend's custom to associate 'with persons the most widely different in manners, abilities, rank and accomplishments.' Two other of the great man's *obiter dicta* — though in many respects it would be difficult to imagine two individuals presenting a greater physical and mental contrast — Thomson, who was fond of quoting Johnsoniana, most certainly exemplified. In the first place he knew the value of being *aliis latus, sapiens sibi*, the meaning of

which the Master expounded as being 'wise in your study in the morning and gay in company at a tavern in the evening.' Secondly, no man ever succeeded more completely in 'clearing his mind of cant.' He hated all humbug and delighted to prick the bubbles of puffed-up vanity, in which process he was sometimes, in contrast with his usual kindness, a little cruel.

Nothing irritated him more than the boastful chauvinism which flourished during the war in some quarters, but if, in his own phrase, he found that 'patriotism was too often pose,' he was, despite his cosmopolitanism, passionately devoted to his country and showed an almost romantic devotion in serving its interests. In the last extract in the diary which forms the first section of this book, he wrote, 'There is no place like England . . . the more I travel, the more I find in the West Country a blessed peace of mind.' Happy indeed he was among 'city wits' and completely at home in London and all the capitals of Europe — above all in Paris, where he was an ideal travelling companion. It was a delight to accompany him along the streets of Paris or to one or other of the restaurants little known to the average Englishman for which he had an infallible flair and in which he was welcomed with open arms for his truly French connoisseurship of the best vintages and the daintiest cooking. But he would gladly 'leave the chargeable noise of this great town' (there seems to have been little to choose between London of the seventeenth and London of the twentieth century) for the simpler pleasures of rural life. Only a week or two before his death he had

# I N T R O D U C T I O N

made a brief tour in Wessex and returned to London extolling the beauties of its pleasant woods and murmuring streams, its bare rolling downs and pleasant valley bottoms, and the incomparable coastal scenery between Lyme Regis and Abbotsbury; and commending with characteristic enthusiasm the fine prose of T. F. Powys's brilliant allegory *Mr. Weston's Good Wine* (which a friend had given him to read on his brief holiday) and the excellence of the descriptions it contains of the Dorsetshire countryside. He loved with a great love my own countryside, and the picture I like best of him is standing on the tees of the Spey Bay Golf Course revelling in that beautiful rounding rim of hills bounding the waters of the Moray Firth. I enjoyed his company in Paris, but I enjoyed it still more on the hills or on the links, where we were closer to the eternal calm and benignity of the things which do not pass away with us.

If he loved the inanimate English scene, its people stirred even more deeply his interest and affection: 'The people of this country are pure gold' . . . he writes in this book under the date October 5th, 1921 — 'Such experience and abilities as I may have are at their service for the remainder of my life.' He gave them of his best, whether in office or out of office, for nine years more, and it was in their service and for their glory that he died on the very anniversary of that day in 1930.

J. RAMSAY MACDONALD

## Compiler's Preface

*ABOUT* six years ago, General Y—, an officer of the British Army, wrote a book in a hurry, a not uncommon crime. 'Crude stuff' observed a well-known publisher whose attention had evidently been drawn to one of many ornate passages. This was a sad blow to their author, who cherished those purple patches as the first fruits of his brain. They had given him enormous pleasure, moments of exaltation in dug-outs, government offices, hotel bedrooms, and had been meditated rapturously in motor-cars and trains. With first books, as with first loves, inexperience brings bliss.

This volume is a compilation of extracts from Y—'s diary and an untidy mass of notes and sketches. It is a leisurely piece of work, done at odd moments, in the intervals of other tasks, by one who can fairly claim to be his oldest friend and sternest critic.

Care and discrimination have been exercised in making these selections; for Y— was a profuse, discursive scribbler and notoriously indiscreet. Many entries in the diary have been entirely omitted and others rigorously expurgated, while to the more sentimental periods sandpaper has been applied. Another procedure in connection with these papers may to many seem absurd: as far as possible names have been suppressed, the title chosen is a pseudonym, and after it a country in south-eastern Europe, that can easily be identified, has been renamed.

Y— would have had it so. Not that he had anything to conceal, but for the reason that the person to whom the pseudonym has been given is still living, and has a horror of publicity.

How far the incidents described are real it would be

## C O M P I L E R ' S   P R E F A C E

*difficult to say. Just as the brain fuzes into a single picture the two distinct impressions received by a pair of eyes, so memory makes a fanciful mosaic of even recent happenings. No doubt, most of Y—'s best adventures were to a large extent imagined, and the characters he endeavours to portray are likewise composite. For, in relation to events and persons, he was always prone to dwell on might have beens rather than what was.*

*Some people thought him cynical because, hearing the gossip that passed for news, watching intriguers scheme and plot, he came to the conclusion that patriotism was too often pose and that most accepted facts were lies. These latter he rejected, preferring to them paradoxes wherein there was at least a grain of truth. He dearly loved a phrase. Like a rag-picker, groping for lost wealth in a rubbish heap, he pounced on anything that glittered.*

*Throughout this preface General Y— has been referred to in the past tense, the reason being that he is now no more. He had been changing for some years before the end came : slowly at first, but later with an acceleration that dismayed his former associates and friends. At the beginning, they had attributed this change to a slight distemper, which they assumed would yield in due course to the mellowing influences of quick promotion and the approach of middle age. When undeceived they circulated rumours:— There was talk about a love affair and politics, and, in the last phase, of a sudden, suicidal plunge. All this was nonsense. Y—'s private life was singularly undisturbed; he was a bachelor and had long since ceased to act on impulse. In point of fact, he passed away serenely, believing in a future life.*

*Had Y— been spared himself, he would have criticized*

# COMPILER'S PREFACE

*the compilation as amorphous, and other critics, no doubt, will point out so obvious a defect. But reflecting on what X— might have perpetrated, in the attempt to make a coherent story of his experiences and fantasies, the fate that intervened and paralysed his pen may be considered kind. Death we are taught is change; and those who knew X— best are not dissemblers when they say that in all the circumstances and on the whole it was just as well he died.*

*Part One*  
*THE DIARY OF BRIG.-GENERAL Y —*





# SMARANDA

MARCH 26 1915

THE train arrived only eight hours late this afternoon, an improvement on my last journey through the mountains. While crossing the great river two Frenchwomen discussed the selfishness of travellers, especially male travellers; their voices were so shrill, they must have intended others beside themselves to hear their views upon this endless theme. Either because he had learnt a lesson, or because the younger woman was quite pretty, a young Englishman helped them to transfer their baggage from the ferry-boat to the landing stage. Personally, I had enough to do to take care of my own. Voyages are supposed to form the character and destroy one's trunks. During a week of promiscuousness and discomfort, such as that just ended, one has been liable to lose both.

When we reached the river's northern bank and entered another neutral State, one of our fellow-passengers, who turned out to be a Yorkshireman, was told that his papers were not in order. He tried to explain himself in French, which he spoke with an excruciating accent, and uttered a few words in German, a lapse that forfeited the sympathy of the majority of those present. We crowded round to listen to the altercation, feeling self-righteous and patriotic, and therefore cruel. After all, precautions had to be taken; here might easily be a spy, and some of us thought ourselves important

~ II ~

people quite worthy of espionage. Moreover, and I must confess this consideration weighed with me, the absence of this man would lessen the congestion in an overcrowded train. He was obviously an experienced traveller and had a way with porters and officials who, hitherto, had always given him the best accommodation; besides, he was fat and took up an undue amount of space. How right those Frenchwomen were!

In my innocence I have regarded a diplomatic passport and a *laissez-passer* as master-keys to preferential treatment when crossing frontiers. To-day I discovered a more potent sesame. After fumbling in several pockets the suspect produced a letter and handed it to the inspector, saying – ‘*lisez cette lettre, c’est d’un homme très important.*’ Only an expert hieroglyphist could have deciphered that illegible scrawl and the signature of the writer. But there was more than mere manuscript on that sheet of white notepaper: it was emblazoned with a coat of arms, and, at the top right-hand corner, an address – King’s House, St. James’s Court. Translating, the Yorkshireman proceeded – ‘*Vous comprenez, n’est-ce pas? La maison du roi, d’Angleterre naturellement, à la cour de St. James.*’ The inspector was evidently impressed and sent for his superior. Together they pored over and spelt out the superscription. I believe the name of the telephone exchange finally brought conviction – Victoria, there was something intimate and personal in that. This thick-set, red-faced man with a waxed moustache was surely some one of importance, perhaps a royalty himself; who else, they

argued, would carry casually such a letter, and speak German by mistake? The letter was returned with reverent hands and he was ushered ceremoniously into a reserved compartment, while we, whose papers were in order, and had all sorts of documents to prove our consequence, stood shivering in the snow.

Thanks to a gracious invitation from the new hero of the hour I shared that compartment for the remainder of the journey. He may be an adventurer, men who are quicker-witted than their rivals are often so described; but he is frank and possesses a fund of information about this part of Europe. I mean to cultivate this man.

At dinner, I think I made a good impression on my new chief by knowing the brand and vintage of his champagne, without having seen the label. He seemed quite stirred at the idea of having a subordinate who could share his taste for bottled sunlight. There is a streak of poetry in all men; but one does not often find it out so soon. This elderly diplomatist partakes of the pleasures of the table with hearty and indeed excessive appetite. His constitution must be magnificent, and it does not surprise me in the least to learn he is of Quaker stock. The genial descendants of sober forbears ought to practise ancestor-worship, out of gratitude for the strong stomachs and digestions they inherit.

*MARCH* 28 1915

I got my first glimpse of smart society to-night, at a concert in the royal residence on the outskirts of the Capital. It was really a most enjoyable affair and so

select as to be homely. One of the royal ladies sang and was decorously applauded; but the real music was supplied by a man, with a shock of black hair like a gipsy, who played the piano. He must have gone right through 'Tristan and Isolde,' and brought out all the passion and suggestion of the music, its calms and storms, its stillness and its transport, emotions as limitless as innumerable waters and as changeeful.

The company consisted of about thirty persons, two-thirds of whom were ladies. We were seated in scattered groups, and the large room, at one time the refectory of a convent, was lit only by two candles on the piano and the blaze of a wood fire on a wide open hearth. In the dim light it was difficult to identify those present, even if one had felt disposed to do so. The queen, with her fair hair and pale-blue starry eyes, looked typically Saxon, and might have been a twentieth century Isolde brought to this semi-Eastern city from Western seas.

This country has been described as a land of romance, and I can well believe it. The women are most attractive in appearance and charming in their ways. The men are accused of being sensual, and this too sounds plausible. What with the climate and the scenery, it is probably true to say that love-making is the national sport. Anyhow, the atmosphere is decidedly exotic and somewhat Eastern.

Sitting in that warm, perfumed room wearing a scarlet tunic and girt with a useless sword, I felt like an impostor. Life in the trenches might be monotonous

and filthy, but at least it gave some moral satisfaction. As a hybrid, half soldier, half diplomatist, one got none. I had neither asked for nor wanted this appointment, and, looking around me, I realized that my special mission was a fool's errand.

When the music ceased the lights were turned on, and shortly afterwards, a couple descended from a gallery at the far end of the room. The man was the King, the lady I had not seen before. She was dressed in black velvet and wore some splendid emeralds. On most women they would have looked outrageous, they were so huge; on her they seemed to have their natural setting. She took a seat behind me, a little to the left, next to the wife of the Prime Minister, and the King left her there. The two ladies were quite close and I could not help hearing what they were saying. The elder one remarked in French — 'I believe that English colonel has an eye in his left ear with which he is looking at you.' She of the emeralds laughed and made some, to me, inaudible reply. Up to date I have met only two Prime Ministers' wives; both have been most observant women. Their husbands gave them lots of practice.

Later on, I secured an introduction to the lady in black velvet. She talks English with an accent that is delicious, and knows more about the British Museum than I do. She and her sister gave me a lift back to this hotel, and here I am, feeling more reconciled to exile than I have felt at any time since leaving London. This shameful confession has to be recorded; it may or may not be good for my soul.

Although I did not like to mention it, her face and something indefinable about her are oddly familiar. Now that I have had time to collect my thoughts, I remember an evening in Paris, just after the South African War, and a carriage halted on the Rue de Rivoli, with a young girl in it, a radiant creature, the memory of whom haunted me long after, and does so still, at any rate it has been revived to-night. She might have been sixteen then. And only last year, some one like her was in a car at the manœuvres in this same country. Some aeroplanes were passing overhead, and I can recall the tilt of her chin and her white neck as she looked up. How strange that such vivid recollections should remain of two brief glimpses. It may be that some woman incarnates each man's ideal of female loveliness, and, once seen, is unforgettable. The lucky man finds her early on, and she is some one within his reach. At least, at the time he thinks that he is lucky, and that is all one can expect.

I really am most unobservant: though we were talking for at least half an hour I didn't notice the colour of her eyes. The lids droop a little, and the eyelashes are exceptionally long and dark; they hang like willow branches over a pool, and what lies behind them may be grey or brown according to the light.

*APRIL 4 1915*

Spring in this country is a short breathless season and lasts about three weeks. A few days back there was snow upon the ground, it is now replaced by a green mantle,

and soon there will be dust. My work has been tiresome rather than heavy – a number of official visits and the usual interchange of platitudes about the war. Propaganda is a craze; people, who in ordinary times are fairly scrupulous, think that they help to win the war by telling the most obvious lies. Intrigue and espionage are rife and on an unprecedented scale. The two groups of belligerents spy upon each other, the local Government upon them both. To do the dirty work, undesirables of both sexes have emerged from obscurity, and some from jails, to become public servants as secret service agents. With them have come, of course, corruption and blackmail.

Society is rather mixed. There are a few genuine refugees from Russia and Central Europe; but, in addition, a host of aliens has flocked in whose aim is profit in some shape or form. The hotels are crowded with financial harpies, mystery-mongers, side-tracked diplomatists and ex-officers, adventurous bachelors, industrious spinsters, and lazy husbands goaded into jobs by discontented wives.

It has been pleasant to escape from the city on the plain, and spend a quiet hour in a garden conveniently remote. More a demesne than garden, an enclosed space containing a strip of woodland, a ruin, a lake of sleeping waters, outbuildings, a chapel and a house on three sides of a courtyard. I have found a name for the châtelaine which suggests some of her attributes – Smaranda. The word means emerald; it was once the name of a Princess whose effigy appears on stained-



glass windows, and who is always represented with a rose in her hand. No doubt, she also loved her garden, and on occasions wore the flashing gems whose name she bore.

I don't think I have ever come across a brain and mind more elegantly stored than are Smaranda's. Her knowledge of art is varied and profound, of French literature and French history amazingly complete. A very clever Frenchman remarked as we motored back together this afternoon — 'Her memory is prodigious; it must hurt to remember so distinctly.' We had been highly entertained by a conversation between Smaranda and an American archæologist, whose special period is the thirteenth century, and who became convinced it was hers also, until she talked of other periods, when he sat greatly marvelling.

The furniture in her country-house is English and really comfortable. As she lolls back in an arm-chair or the corner of a sofa, Smaranda looks more like a flower than a thing of human clay. The flower I think would be an orchid. And when I hear her easy flow of learning, a queer notion comes into my head — that at her elbow, or behind her shoulder, there is an old wizened hobgoblin of whom she stands in awe. She likes old men, if they are erudite and clever, and enjoys ugliness. Her men friends include the bald, the pimply, the bulbous-nosed, the big-eared, some of the ugliest human beings I ever saw. So with this hobgoblin. I picture him with a great big head and small misshapen form, lurking in shadowy corners where curtains meet the

well-filled bookshelves, distilling ancient wisdom for her, watching approvingly while she works, listening to conversations and whispering counsel; in short, a familiar spirit, and a literary one at that. I wish this fantastic idea had not occurred to me; it may become an obsession.

Smaranda is not popular; her admirers are legion, but that don't help her with her own sex. She possesses too many advantages: wealth, beauty, brains and social position combined in a single person are unforgivable: any two of them together excite misgivings in the jealous. At a time like this her position is particularly delicate, for, in addition to her other gifts, she has a European mind. In ten years this kind of mind may be Europe's salvation; to-day it brings reproach.

*RUSSIAN G.H.Q. MAY 6 1915*

My duties have taken me to the head-quarters of the Russian Army. The Grand Duke Nicholas talks more sense than any Commander-in-Chief I have yet met. He knows the topography of this part of Europe, while the others most certainly do not. The talk about a Russian steam-roller is sheer nonsense. It is with the utmost difficulty that the Russian armies are maintained on their advanced positions, while stationary, owing to the difficulty of supplying them with a sufficiency of food and ammunition. Russia has only five main railway lines connecting her western frontier with the interior, and few good roads. Never was there a country less fitted for a war of workshops, such as that now

being waged on the Western Front, and never was there a people less capable of offensive action on a large scale. The Russians are patient, unwarlike and good-natured, and above all passive; they wait for things to happen to them; only when roused and on the defensive are they tenacious fighters. Moscow is the heart of the Russian Empire, and modern armies will share the fate of Napoleon's Grand Army if they attempt to take and occupy this Tartar city. But to lead a horde of ill-equipped and half-trained peasants across the frontiers of Austria and Germany is to invite disaster.

I often wonder whether these soldiers, who are really big simple-hearted children, will not some day be stampeded like a herd of cattle. Up to a point they are well treated, but after that the brutality, exploitation and mismanagement begin. The majority of Russians, though semi-Asiatics, are constrained to follow Western methods. Their diplomacy is conducted by Balts or Poles, and their armies are for the most part led by generals imbued with French or German doctrines. In these conditions, policy is inevitably confused and strategy abortive and spasmodic. A Balt is at heart a German, while the Poles, living as they have lived for centuries between the upper and nether millstones of Slav and Teuton, must in a war between the two have difficulty in choosing sides. Prussian discipline may be justified by Prussian efficiency and organization; it only exasperates when accompanied by corruption and neglect. French tactics are applicable by fiery, quick-witted Gauls, they are utterly inappropriate to stolid

Russian peasants. The dense columns of slow-moving infantry I have passed offer a perfect target to artillery fire; the clouds of Cossack cavalry will be caught, like trapped animals, in barbed wire entanglements and mown down by machine-guns. The thought of all the slaughter sickens. The men are so rustic and so kindly, the beasts they bring with them so strong; both are so good to look upon and are being driven as it were into a furnace. Modern war transfers industrial activity to the countryside; Vulcan invades the domain of Ceres and even that of Mars.

I attended the Grand Duke on an evening ride. He is a *Grand Seigneur* and a patriot who inspires his men with terror and affection. For all his Parisian polish, he reminds me of those despotic Khans who invaded Europe in the seventh century, or rather of the description given of them in certain history books. He is none the worse for that. The Russian soldiers probably prefer a tyrant who is paternal and understands their limitations, and his own, to a blundering imitator who makes them cannon fodder.

On the question of my special mission, I got a definite response which will not please the authorities at home. The Grand Duke describes as *une folie furieuse* the military convention I am instructed to arrange. He says his front is long enough already, and that he would rather have its left rest on a neutral State, Smarandaland, whose neutrality might occasionally be violated, than on an allied State whose army, in his opinion, was not trustworthy. We were taught at the

Staff College that policy and strategy should be in harmony; there seems to be very little of either on our side. I dare say the Germans are just as bad.

Although I have always been what is called an Easterner, I can see the point of the Grand Duke's argument. In this theatre we should begin with Constantinople, i.e. force the Dardanelles, and then the neutral States will beg to be admitted as our allies. Instead, we employ every means to 'bring them in,' regardless of the fact that, in the actual military situation, we cannot make effective use of their armies. As a consequence we increase our vulnerability without adding to our strength.

I have telegraphed the Grand Duke's views to London, but that will do no good: the person who is never heeded is the man on the spot.

*THE CITY ON THE PLAIN. MAY 15 1915*

The rain has been pouring down all day on dogs and diplomats alike; the former yawn in archways and on doorsteps, the latter wear goloshes and pay mysterious calls. I wrote to Smaranda while away in Russia, telling her she possessed one great advantage over all other human beings; it was not her voice, though that is pleasantly vibrating, nor her neck and shoulders and what the French call *omoplates*, nor indeed any of her personal charms; it did not consist in what she did but rather in what she could not do or be; for, while breath was in her body, she would be spared the greatest of all afflictions — being parted from herself. Her reply

S M A R A N D A

arrived to-day and she informs me that my letter had been opened. I sent it by the official messenger, so there must be some prying creature in one or other of the Legations. They can read anything I ever wrote; but the annoying part of the whole business is that most of the men in these Legations have got coarse minds.

Smaranda is on board a yacht cruising about the estuary of the great river. She invites me to join her and I mean to do so if it is humanly possible to get away. A lot has been said and written about the mountain scenery in this country. To my mind the plains are more impressive. The wide valley at this river's mouth is a plain of immense fertility where it is not marshy. The river itself appeals to the imagination, because so much has happened on its banks; and more will happen in the near future unless I am much mistaken.

*THE YACHT. MAY 20 1915*

We have had three days of perfect weather and great enjoyment, if not of perfect peace. Our party consists of Smaranda and two other ladies, a French diplomatist, a local archæologist and myself. The Frenchman pays too many compliments to ladies in general and Smaranda in particular; but he knows all about artistic matters, or pretends to, and rather cuts me out. We have been spending the hours of daylight on shore, wandering among the remains of Roman walls and ancient monuments. My task has consisted in carrying slabs of stone to the motor-car; they look like paving

S M A R A N D A

stones to me, but Smaranda calls them *fouilles*. In the intervals I kept off the savage mongrel dogs who infest these villages, while the Frenchman discoursed on art and kept his clothes and fingers clean. On the yacht I hold my own a little better. The river is wonderful. Pascal described rivers as roads that move, and this great mass of water sliding past us is one of Europe's highways. It is a monster not easily controlled when the snows melt and swell its volume. Various attempts have been made to contain and harness this mighty force before its dissipation in the sea. An English engineer achieved a measure of success, not by constructing dams and sluice-gates which would have been swept away, but by a cut or artificial channel scoured by the stream itself and navigable at all seasons of the year. If one can't dominate a river one has to trick it, as women cajole men.

This is our last evening on the yacht. To-morrow, Smaranda goes to her castle in the mountains, and I, and I hope the Frenchman, back to the City on the Plain.

I am taking with me a supply of caviare; it is fresh and lustrous, this spawn of sturgeon who may have swum around the yacht during these days of mixed emotions. He who bears gifts of this description is always welcomed, understood, and forgiven by my most worthy chief.

JUNE 10 1915

I am returning to England with a view to trying to explain the situation here. It is the Prime Minister's

own suggestion, I mean the Prime Minister of this country. His problem as a neutral has become complicated by the entry of Italy into the war. Now, the Italian Minister says to him — ‘Do as we have done,’ and he is tempted to reply — ‘I would if I could get as much as you have got.’ In point of fact, the proposition is purely military at this stage. The most glowing promises are worth no more than pie-crust unless victory attends our operations, and the news from Gallipoli is most discouraging. In present circumstances, this country cannot contribute effectively to securing victory for the Allies. The Prime Minister wants to join us, no other course is open to him, but he is waiting for what he calls the *moment opportun*.

If I were asked to summarize the attitude of thinking people in the neutral states towards the belligerent powers, I would say — fear and respect for Germany; affection and sympathy for France, but lack of confidence in exuberant French promises; profound distrust of Russia; curiosity with regard to Italy, and uncertainty so far as Great Britain is concerned. As for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the liquidation of that ‘mediæval bibelot,’ as Isvolsky called it, is taken for granted. It is rather sad, because the Austrians are so nice; moreover, it may be a serious miscalculation, the Hungarians are a stubborn race in addition to being picturesque. No one is willing to envisage the complete defeat of either Germany or Great Britain. Two conceptions of invincibility are current — the German Army and the British Fleet. King Constantine of Greece is



not alone in predicting a stalemate. The German eagle struts upon the ground, the British lion swims; some day they may really fight each other — in the upper air.

JUNE 16 1915

I have never yet got into a train heading for London without a secret satisfaction bordering upon rapture, and I have been in many pleasant places far from Big Ben. On this occasion, in this train come to a standstill on the Russian frontier, my feelings are quite different. I said good-bye to Smaranda, a few hours ago, and hated leaving her. She has more enemies than friends and needs the latter; but it is no use trying to cheat myself that altruism is the explanation of my depression. She is adorable in her variety. 'This afternoon there were no signs of the hobgoblin. Leaning against the table in the hall, her eyes veiled shyly by dark eyelashes, she looked like an English girl of twenty, and I told her so. I now know that her eyes are brown; her hair is chestnut, parted at the side, and lies in ripples, her maid's handiwork no doubt, but what a first-class maid. As usual, she was dressed in black, her family is in mourning; but that simple, loosely fitting frock betrayed its origin, and all the man-defeating skill of a Parisian dressmaker. And that reminds me: I have got to bring her back more clothes from Paris, gallons of perfume, and some hats. Heaven knows what will happen at the frontiers!

Shall I come back? That is the question to be answered. I'll do my best to get another job, and at the

same time get her to come to Switzerland or France, or better still to England. It will be difficult to arrange, however, and she would return at once to her own country if it were caught in the vortex of the war.

I don't think that will happen for a long time yet. After all, these neutral states are having a great time: loans are theirs for the asking, the ministers of the Great Powers flatter and cajole, even the Russian is polite. The national aspirations of the people of Smarandaland were at one time considered unreasonable, if not ridiculous; now Teuton vies with Slav in sympathy for those same aims. The French are marvellous; their representative invents the most gorgeous prospects and leads the Prime Minister, metaphorically, up a hill of temptation at least once a week. The Italian talks of Latin unity, and really believes he is paying these people a high compliment, when he invites them to do what the Italians have done, without regard to circumstances, or time, or place. The British Minister pays fewer compliments; but the British tax-payer foots the bill. So far, the loans have been suggested by the French, encouraged by the Russians, approved by the Italians, accepted by the Smarandalanders, after some haggling about the terms, and raised in London.

In his way, the Prime Minister is enjoying life. When he talks about the heavy burden of responsibility on his shoulders, I look straight into his eyes and see a twinkle. He likes power, not for its petty uses, but as the natural appanage of a distinguished statesman's son. It must be enormous fun for this proud man, as the

first citizen of a little Balkan State, to play the Great Powers off against each other. He is playing a dangerous game, but plays it well, and I will do my best for him at home. His *moment opportun* is ours as well; it is the moment when the military co-operation of this country can be made effective. Premature interventions would be worse than useless. I have been called a traitor for trying to impress this obvious fact on our diplomatists.

I wonder what they think of me in Petrograd. Like all the Capitals of Europe, it must be humming with intrigue. No doubt the French Minister has done his best to put his embassy and ours against me. I don't mind that so much; in the end one gets rough justice in this world, and I am right. An old friend told me once that I was at my worst when I was in the right. It may be so, and all the more reason for my ceasing to be a kind of diplomatist. No, I will not come back.

It is a perfect night. There is no need for lamps; the moonlight floods the station buildings, makes shining ribbons of the rails, transforms the locomotives so that they look like things of life, snorting as though impatient to be gone, their breath white jets of steam shot upward in the windless air. My thoughts go back to a broad sheet of sleeping waters, a ruin, a house, a chapel, and a courtyard, all bathed in this same light. As a Japanese poet puts it — 'Far from your eyes my eyes watch the starry heavens — Ah! if the moon might be changed into a mirror.'

I wish this train would start.

PETROGRAD. JUNE 22 1915

Somewhat to my surprise, the atmosphere in Petrograd is fairly cordial. Official Russia is opposed to the intervention of Smarandaland for various reasons. I don't think that these latter include military considerations, for here it is difficult to believe that there is a war. The general impression seems to be that my friend the Prime Minister is driving too hard a bargain, and this is fairly true. He has an inherited distrust of Russia, and is a past-master of what the French call – *un marchandage Balkanique*. On the other hand, the Russians are accustomed to bullying the Balkan States, and feel humiliated when compelled to treat one of them as an equal. In the case of Smarandaland there is a special cause of irritation – nearly forty years ago this little state helped Russia at the Siege of Plevna. Assistance was imperatively needed and could not be refused; the road to Constantinople had to be kept open, and Smarandaland was a geographical fact not to be overlooked in this hour of need, though assuredly to be rectified at a later date. Small states should never help great neighbours: by doing so they remind the strong of their propinquity to the weak, and the sense of obligation is apt to smart. The least experience of international politics refutes the fable of the lion and the mouse.

Lemberg has fallen, but no one seems to mind.

*THE FRONTIER OF SWEDEN. JUNE 26 1915*

In the train with me are the American archaeologist and the man from Yorkshire. I share a compartment with the former and find him excellent company. He knows every one, Grand Dukes and Duchesses, Ambassadors, and all the lovely ladies, politicians, generals, journalists, and some quite obscure people not met in the gay world. His defect is that he neither drinks nor smokes.

The Yorkshireman makes up the average; he is never without a cigar, and 'drinks with impunity or with anyone who asks him.' Nevertheless, each morning finds him hale and hearty; I wish my forbears had been Quakers, as, like my chiefs, his were. This roving individual has got a concession in the Balkans, and with an eye to the future has been making friends in Petrograd. He thus reveals a keen sense of realities: when we have won this war, one or perhaps two Balkan States may become Russian provinces.

*LONDON. JULY 2 1915*

Lord Kitchener has ordered me to return to Smarandaland and 'bring that country in.' At dinner last night he talked about the Western Front, and said that ten thousand lives were often sacrificed to take a potato field. If the war of attrition goes on at this rate, there will soon be only senior officers left, on both sides, and then there will be peace. Lord Kitchener doesn't believe that concentrating carnage on one front is the

way to win a world war. But he has been baffled by military experts; he isn't one himself, and has never learnt their jargon. His position must be almost unbearable: so much is expected of him that he cannot give. The General Staff hoped he would run the Cabinet and let the Generals have their heads. He could not and cannot do this, even if he would, and that is more than doubtful.

Army and Navy officers profess contempt for politicians and say that politics are a dirty game; yet many play it when they get a chance. On their side, the politicians are discovering that intrigue is not unknown in military and naval circles. I met one yesterday who six months ago was a perfectly harmless civilian; he is now a colonel, and told me he had come back from our Head-quarters in France to breathe the purer air of Westminster for awhile. I suppose that we really want a soldier statesman: what a pity Lord Kitchener is not ten years younger.

Like all wars, this war is abnormal, and surely there has never been a greater muddle. God help the men who, when it's all over, will attempt to frame peace treaties; we have made enough promises already to cause at least one other war, if the promises are kept. I am to return to Smarandaland through Bulgaria and warn the Government of this latter country against joining the Central Empires. I rather like my message; it is to the effect that whatever the cost, and even if it means compulsory service in Great Britain, or the raising of an army of six million men, we

mean to win this war. That is the way to talk to neutrals.

Bulgaria's co-operation is of incalculable value, worth any price; with it we could take Constantinople in a month. The price is a settlement of the Macedonian question. One of the best judges of the Balkan situation has said that the Western Powers will have to dictate a settlement to our ally Serbia and to the neutrals, Bulgaria and Greece. If our statesmen had time to think about South-eastern Europe they would follow this advice. Unfortunately, they are far too busy with problems nearer home.

I often think of Kinglake's words, in his *History of the Crimean War*, where he speaks of the 'shadow of the alliance' on Lord Raglan's face. The face of Sir John French wore that shadow when I saw him at St. Omer. Last Christmas we were talking about a campaign in the Balkans, or rather of a campaign based on the Balkans, for, if we had taken Constantinople, both Greece and Bulgaria would have been our Allies. I was describing the nature of the country and the character of the peoples, the great river valleys, wide fertile plains, Croats, Bosniaks, and Slovenes, all eager to throw off Austria-Hungary's yoke and join the invaders in the march to Fiume and Trieste. I pointed out that a comparatively small force of British cavalry and infantry would suffice for this movement, whose object would be to turn strategically the southern flank of the Central Empires, and that our Tommies would get on famously with the Serbs: I had seen British bluejackets

working with Serbian soldiers. He got quite interested, and made a remark that I have always remembered as a veritable *cri du cœur* – ‘Where do I come in?’ I did not reply, as I might have done with absolute sincerity and truth, that he was the ideal leader of such a force, and, after a pause of foolish silence on my part, he continued: ‘It’s a napoleonic scheme, but where is our Napoleon?’ Again I bungled badly by not giving the obvious reply; instead, I rambled on about Marengo being a side-show, until he cut me short just as I was proving that it was the turning-point in a campaign. All the same, if Bonaparte had been defeated at Marengo, he would never have been Napoleon, and Josephine would probably have run away with his aide-de-camp, who was skilled in parlour tricks.

*BULGARIA. JULY 17 1915*

As I feared, it is too late now to negotiate with the Bulgarian Government. The die is already cast. When he heard my message, King Ferdinand remarked that we might quite possibly win the war, and in fact he thought we would, as the British had a way of winning the last battle. His principle is, apparently, that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush: he wants Macedonia now, and the Germans have promised it to him. I asked what he thought would happen when we were finally victorious, and he replied that we would be far too taken up with other matters to attempt to drive him out. ‘These cynics often get nearer to the truth than patriots.’



*IN THE MOUNTAINS. JULY 30 1915*

The heat in the Capital has been appalling, and I have escaped to these cool forest heights for a few days in Smaranda's mountain home. It is fairly isolated; the fashionable resort and a casino are ten miles distant.

I arrived early this morning with a portmanteau full of garments, scents, and other articles, from London and Paris for Smaranda. Nothing had been lost, no hat was crushed, no bottle broken during that long journey. I felt like a man who had brought supplies to a beleaguered fortress.

No one else is staying here at present: to-morrow some other guests arrive. The Queen came over to tea and carried off a regal share of perfume; after she had left, we went for a ride in the forest. As Smaranda rode beside me I thought of those lines by Tennyson, in 'Lancelot and Guinevere,' which begin – 'She looked so lovely as she swayed the rein with dainty finger-tip . . .' and misquoted them rather badly. The surroundings and the woman I was with were enough to make any man sentimental.

But it was more than sentiment. With Smaranda one enjoys a rare companionship wherein romance and mental stimulus are combined. She listens, laughs at British jokes, suggests their parallels in French, makes stupid men, with dull, fagged brains, feel brilliant, draws out the best one has to give, and talks our language by translation; to hear her speaking English is the best way of learning French, and certainly the

nicest. Above all, she understands. I found myself telling her of disappointments in Petrograd, London, France; of how I thought the campaign ought to be conducted, so that we might really win the war, and not succeed merely because we could survive, for just a little longer than the Germans, the drain of moral and material resources. She sympathized and spoke of Alexander, the conqueror of Asia, called the Great, about whom she, when nineteen years of age, had written a charming book.

As the sun set a hush fell on the forest, and we too were silent. A bird flashed across the glade before us, and, in the fading light, I thought I saw the gleam of azure on its breast and wings. Was it mere fancy, or, indeed, that swiftly passing and elusive bird we all pursue?

Four questions come into my mind:

'How may she catch the sunlight and wear it in her hair?'

'Where is the golden apple whose core is not despair?'

'How may one cull the honey and yet not pluck the flower?'

'And how can man, being happy, still keep his happy hour?'

Smaranda has told me to write something about a forest, and I will. It would be sloshy if I wrote about blue birds, so I will write about an owl.

We heard an owl's cry as we were dismounting, a harsh, strident note that struck a chill. But we soon forget it in the warmth and light of the great house.

*IN THE MOUNTAINS. AUGUST 3 1915*

Our party now consists of five ladies and four men – Smaranda, her daughter, an English governess, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, and a very attractive widow with the virginal angelic type of face that suggests virtues too often non-existent; the men are an old professor as learned as he is ugly, a local poet who is also a great land-owner and much in request, the French diplomatist, and myself. Lastly, there is the cat, a tom called Pat.

Personally, I hate cats and am rather afraid of them when they are big. Pat is a monster and very heavy; I guess his weight, not because I have ever picked him up – I wouldn't dare to – but by the thud when he jumps down from a sofa, and when he runs his is no noiseless, velvet-footed tread. I should imagine his claws are seldom sheathed and both long and sharp. He leads a life that many a man might envy: he toils not, neither does he spin, but sleeps in the sun when not being flattered and caressed; he is well and regularly fed, exerts himself occasionally by hunting in the forest, but does so purely as a sport and for the sake of killing something. The English governess, who is very British and a stanch member of the Church of England, treats him as though he was a sacred cat and she herself a devotee of Isis or a priestess of the moon.

Pat accepts homage with indifference, and even when Smaranda strokes his back disdains to purr. In fact, I don't believe he ever purrs or manifests contentment.

Something must have embittered him in early youth, if indeed he ever was a kitten, this taciturn and joyless cat who doesn't even prowl by night.

Last night Pat played a leading part in a drama. After dinner, the poet having read selections from his works, in to me an unknown tongue, the French diplomatist brought down a manuscript setting forth his ideas on Roman art. From this he proceeded to read aloud to Smaranda and the Professor, who were seated, or rather reclining, on a divan. With them was Pat, looking as supercilious as an art expert. Once they had got going on this topic, the rest of us might not have existed. On occasions like these I became irritable and critical, even of Smaranda; I seem to see that old hobgoblin grinning and know him for my foe.

After some aimless talk, Smaranda's daughter and her governess retired; later, the lady-in-waiting went up to bed: she had come for a rest. The widow and the poet seemed to be getting on quite nicely. I heard her tell him that his poem on snowflakes was divine, but doubt if she understood a word of it; most upper-class Smarandalanders know French far better than their own language. He looked as if he would have liked to eat her. It is simply asking for trouble for an alluring female to pay compliments to a poet in Smarandaland, or anywhere else for that matter. If I could have started a conversation with this widow, Smaranda might have stopped listening to the Frenchman reading; but I never got a chance after the poet translated into broken French a poem extolling purity. She gazed at him with

a saintly expression on her face, and had no ears for British common-sense.

At long last the party broke up. The discussion of Roman art continued on the way upstairs, and the names Talisman and Adam-Klissi echoed along the corridors as bedroom doors were closed. Both names revived memories of paving-stones.

It might have been an hour later when I woke up, aroused by strange noises in the dead of night. Needless to say the house is haunted, and at first I thought the ghost was walking, or rather running. If I had to give evidence in a court of law on the events of last night, which God forbid, they would be, in chronological order, something as follows: In my earliest waking moments I became aware of stealthy footsteps passing down the passage; there followed the creaking sounds that are unavoidable however careful the descent of an old wooden staircase; then the opening of a door below, and movements in the drawing-room as of some one groping in the dark; a hoarse snarl preceded a familiar thud, after which, to judge by the clatter of falling crockery, chairs and tables, there was a scuffle; then again footsteps on the stairs, but now no longer careful, some one was bounding upwards two steps at a time as though running for dear life in bedroom slippers. He, or she, passed my door like a whirlwind, and, being by now wide-awake, I heard the scratching, pattering footfall of a four-footed beast with claws in hot pursuit. A few seconds later, the hunted person was evidently overtaken; by this time I had reached my

door but could see nothing, as the passage turned to the right and the scene being enacted was round the corner. Little imagination was required to picture it. Driven to desperate courses, the fugitive was trying to enter the nearest room, heedless of who might be its proper occupant; but some one barred the way. A violent altercation then arose in which I could distinguish the voices of the Frenchman and the poet above the snarling, spitting sounds Pat made when he was angry.

A difficult and delicate situation had undoubtedly arisen, and the problem was how to proceed. Everything had happened so quickly one had had no time to think. I was on the point of going to intervene when I heard another voice, female and British; half admonishing, half wheedling, it said – ‘Pat, what do you mean by making this disturbance and waking people up? Come here to me at once, you naughty Pat.’ As though by magic, this invocation stilled the tumult. The Frenchman and the poet strove no longer, and the cat, presumably, obeyed. I would have given much to have seen as well as heard what happened, but as I reached the corner of the passage three doors were closed and silence reigned. A minute later the stable clock struck two. Of man’s mechanical inventions the clock is the most imperturbable: if wound up it will strike and tick, indifferently, during a sermon or a murder. Last night that double beat had something majestic in its message: within the house were listening ears alert from vulgar curiosity; the clock told of great solemn things without – the mountains and the murmur of the

forest. It seemed to say – ‘Sleep while you can in peace, you foolish ones! Must I, at this late hour, remind you of the flight of time?’

The French diplomatist gave me his version of the incident this morning. He declares that, after having gone to bed, he suddenly remembered his manuscript, which, when we went upstairs, had been left on the divan in the drawing-room. Fearing lest the precious document, of which no copy yet exists, should be destroyed by a careless servant unconscious of its value, he donned his dressing-gown and went as silently as possible to retrieve it. I have myself experienced some difficulty in finding the electric switches in this house; he seems to have been completely baffled, and reached the drawing-room at last only to find a deeper darkness. His subsequent adventures he described with an eloquence that was truly moving and impossible to reproduce; besides, he bore marks upon his person more eloquent than words. Immediately after entering the room, he became conscious of another presence. Many people know when a cat is near, although invisible; and so it was on this occasion – Pat was on guard, and too late, in the impenetrable gloom, the Frenchman realized that horrid fact. A moment of agonizing doubt ensued; the dreadful silence was then broken by what had sounded to myself upstairs like a snarl; he says it was a roar, and struck such terror to his heart that he would gladly have sacrificed ten manuscripts to be back safe in bed. He turned and fled; but Pat had leapt down from the divan and cut off his retreat. The next few

seconds must have been terrible. Had it not been for an accident – the upsetting of a table on which was a large bowl containing flowers and water whose contents deluged Pat – Heaven knows what would have been the outcome of the struggle. Somehow Pat's prisoner reached the door and, heedless of all obstacles, dashed through the hall and up the stairs. But before he reached his bedroom the cat overtook him; whereupon, still smarting from past contact, he turned the nearest door handle, opened the door, and collided violently with the poet.

For the first time this Frenchman had my sympathy, and I shared his indignation at the inhospitable conduct of the poet, who, so far from welcoming a fellow-writer in distress, not only refused him admittance but came out into the passage, closing the door behind him. Pat, undismayed by this reinforcement, was prepared to face them both, according to his victim, and the battle might have been prolonged but for the intervention of my countrywoman.

Again I say, God forbid that I should have to give evidence in a court of law on last night's happenings. Hearing is not seeing, and I don't know what may be termed the distributive geography of that passage. The Professor says his room is next door to the poet's, and he slept through the fracas peacefully. The widow heard nothing also. This afternoon, watching her seated on the terrace, cool, calm, collected and angelic, I wondered where her room could be, if what she said were true.



Pat was there also, dozing with eyes half closed. The governess says he is a Persian, but I don't believe he is a cat at all. To me he is a feline Cerberus, whose sire, a roving Typhon, may have fought his way from Teheran or Egypt to the Carpathian foothills, and there discovered in a forest glade a frail Echidna with a silky coat. And having made night hideous with his caterwauls, he left her there to bring into the world a litter including Pat – the pampered Puritan, predestined scourge of a French diplomat, bane of a prowling poet, morose, implacable protector of manuscripts and female virtue, dread of somnambulists and all who walk by night.

Not a word has fallen from the poet; in fact, I haven't seen him since. Perhaps he too forgot his manuscript, and was on his way to retrieve the poems on purity and snowflakes when he bumped into the Frenchman. The lady-in-waiting and myself were alone at tea-time; she is a mirror of discretion, and looks what I call palace-wise.

Smaranda is in literary mood to-day. This is the hour of the hobgoblin.

*THE CITY ON THE PLAIN. AUGUST 20 1915*

The Allies are buying the wheat crop of Smarandaland, to prevent it falling into the hands of the Germans. Once more the British tax-payer will pay, this time about ten millions sterling. Our wealth is the long suit in the allied hand; but victories are trumps in time of war, tricks are not won by discarding millions fever-

ishly. Agriculture is the main industry of this country, where the roads are few and bad. In normal times, a farmer having reaped his crops spends several months in transporting them to the river or the nearest railway. Now, owing to the partial mobilization of the army, horses and cattle have been taken from the land and the transportation problem has become acute. Millions of tons of cereals will be wasted or buried by the peasants; we are buying what cannot possibly be moved for months if not years to come.

Superfluity on the country-side and famine in the towns: that may well be the situation if the war drags on, and then, the peasants will stop producing more than they need themselves. Thus a great industry will be paralysed.

One would think from the telegrams sent to me by our War Office that all the wheat in Smarandaland could be collected in one big bin; and that the British, having bought it, could put a policeman on point duty to see that no one took a grain away. This deal, as it is called, is considered a diplomatic triumph, whereas it is an unnecessarily extravagant and largely futile bribe. Smarandaland cannot harvest her crops and at the same time mobilize her army. If we want her to do the latter we should leave the former alone, and keep our money for munitions. Already the price of wheat is rising, although every one is out to sell. Prospective profit is the mother of invention: in the more inaccessible districts there are, on paper, fertile fields where never a stalk of corn has grown until this golden year.

My Yorkshire friend gets purple in the face when he talks about the transaction. He is a poacher turned gamekeeper in spite of himself, and this squandering of British gold, on other people, has made of him a fervid patriot.

The Germans are buying a part of the old crop; I should much like to see their contract and wonder how and when they'll pay. I don't believe they want this country as an ally; it is more useful to them as a neutral granary. If it joins us, they can, in existing military conditions, overrun it and take without payment all that is required for the maintenance of their troops. But they won't get much away to Germany, where the need is greatest.

Smarandaland is a Latin island in a sea of Magyars and Slavs; less than half a century ago it was under the suzerainty of Turkish Sultans. The peasants are Orientals without knowing it, and members of the orthodox Greek Church without wishing it. The aristocracy contains a large Greek element; most of the princely families are descended from rulers nominated in Constantinople. Their spiritual home is France, and they are too cosmopolitan to be good citizens. The business community has German leanings. All classes dislike and distrust Russia. Jews are numerous; the ruling Prince who first admitted them levied a poll-tax on the frontier, and with the proceeds bought for his lady-love some emeralds (not Smaranda's); these stones have ever since been known as the country's tears. There is a lot of snobbishness and humbug about this

anti-Jewish pose; here, as elsewhere, a Jew, if he is rich enough, can pick and choose among the Gentiles his company or his wife.

I am going to make a tour round the provincial garrisons. This city, like most capitals, is not really representative of life in Smarandaland; it is an Oriental Paris, but its wickedness has been exaggerated. Vice is frank and flaunting, but, in proportion to the population, there is no more of it than in an English country town. Curiosity is the worst defect of these people; it is insatiable, and if not gratified with some grains of truth feeds on inventions of the most scandalous description. But this again is fairly universal. The Prime Minister informed me the other day that (through his Secret Service, I imagine) he followed my movements with great interest, and was pleased to add that he approved my taste.

For some time to come my diary will be exclusively official and therefore dull. These are the dog days, and there is no prospect of this country intervening; none of the conditions insisted on by the Prime Minister have been satisfied, and as things are at present I cannot conscientiously urge him to make a move. The operations at Gallipoli are going badly for us; Bulgaria has, for all practical purposes, gone over to the enemy; Allied plans in regard to Salonika have yet to mature.

Of course, I know myself we cannot lose, and that we shall go on till we've won; but it is difficult to persuade people, who do not know at first hand the stolid tenacity of the British, that this is so. Even Smaranda

doubts. Poland is near, and is being overrun by German armies; England is far, her purpose is not clear, she speaks to South-eastern Europe in French or Russian with an uncertain voice. Here are two dominating races – the Teuton and the Slav; no other really counts; and the Teuton is winning all along the line. It is an act of faith for Smarandalanders to turn their eyes to a distant island shrouded in mist. I believe the Prime Minister is beginning to think that our policy is like our climate. All the same, were it not for the British, Smarandaland would join with Germany against Russia, and try to forget both France and Italy.

*THE CITY ON THE PLAIN. NOVEMBER 30 1915*

Nothing will happen in this part of the world before next summer. There are many pretexts, not to say good reasons, for delay – the approach of winter, the lack of munitions, the non-fulfilment of essential conditions, and of course the fact that the Bulgarian armies have occupied Serbia. The Balkan situation has been transformed; Smarandaland is now cut off from the Western Powers, and can only communicate with them through Russia. Not easily does a lamb confide its fate to the tender mercies of a wolf. So I am faced with at least six months of inactivity and exile. The prospect is still further darkened by the departure of Smaranda; she is leaving shortly for a stay in Switzerland on account of her daughter's state of health.

I am writing a memorandum on the situation, but I doubt whether it will be read in the War Office at

home. There, all they want is the identification of units of the German Army on the Eastern Front. A large staff is permanently employed in collating reports about the movements of battalions; periodically, the results of their efforts are published in a book, which shows where those units were, more or less correctly, but is of little use for immediate purposes. The conduct of war has passed through many phases; to-day it is a wholesale butchery, a triumph of matter over mind; modern armies are overstaffed with hard-working men who toil like archivists. In the meantime, large issues are neglected. On both sides the same system is pursued, and this war may last indefinitely unless some one breaks the rules. It is a paradise for professional soldiers; if a Napoleon should appear they would crucify him if they could.

We are sending an army to Salonika and abandoning the Dardanelles, or in other words dropping the substance for the shadow. The substance was a campaign calling for every effort, naval and military, mental and moral, our nation could put forth. The shadow is another front, a fixed front in a region where topography and climate combine to restrict manœuvre, and where no decision can be reached. Thousands of men will die there of disease before they ever see the Front.

The Prime Minister of Smarandaland is an arm-chair strategist and not a bad one: he is full of common-sense. Unless the Allied forces at Salonika can exert such pressure as to contain the whole Bulgarian army, and this he doubts, the conditions for his intervention

# S M A R A N D A

will not have been fulfilled. As a soldier, I cannot and will not advise him to take the risk; in the first place it would not be honest; our General Staff would never put a British force in such a false position; in the second, it could only bring disaster, and another disaster may be fatal to the Allied cause. My position is most disagreeable; in spite of myself I am a kind of Devil's advocate.

DECEMBER 3 1915

Last night I dined at the 'Sleeping Waters' and motored back. I had only just got home when the telephone bell rang. Somehow, I felt that I was going to hear important if not fateful tidings, one doesn't often get called up in the small hours. My premonition was fully justified; it was Smaranda's voice that spoke and told me that her castle in the mountains was on fire. Within ten minutes I was in the garage and had roused my chauffeur Virgil; five minutes later we were racing along the empty streets. Smaranda, in another car, was waiting for us at the corner, where the side road to the 'Sleeping Waters' joins the Great North Road. Together, in silence after a few brief explanations, we sat while the high-powered Daimler devoured space. For twenty miles across the plain the road is broad and straight, then it begins to climb and wind among the foothills. The night was clear and very still; in the far distance we could see a red glow in the sky.

A scene of the war in South Africa came back to me; it was not so irrelevant as might appear at first sight. It had been my painful duty to burn a farm used

by the Boers as a store for arms and ammunition. We found only a woman and two children on the premises, but there were ample proofs to justify an act of arson. We put the family on a wagon, with a varied assortment of household goods and chattels, and sent them off early so that they might be spared the sight of their home burn. Unfortunately, my plan failed. After sunset I caught the wagon up as it was crossing the plain; the woman was seated in the hinder part and staring back at a red glow among the hills. I shall never forget the look of dull despair upon her face. She was a plain Dutchwoman roughened by toil and far from comely; Smaranda is one of the world's spoilt darlings, lovely and exquisite. Of the first, my sergeant said to me—'Let her be, sir; it's no good trying to comfort a woman when she's like that.' On the principle that a married man ought to know when womankind is inconsolable, I took his advice on that occasion and applied it again last night to Smaranda.

On entering the park, we realized that the worst had happened. Hundreds of villagers had done their best to save the building, but the fire-extinguishing appliances were scanty, and the old woodwork had burnt with astonishing rapidity. Some pictures and furniture had been brought out, and to these Smaranda rushed in search of specially prized treasures. It was too late to think of saving more; the roof had fallen in; the thick stone walls enclosed a roaring furnace.

Day dawned at last upon a scene of desolation and destruction. We watched the wan light creep across the



sky, by it discerned a clump of melancholy birches leaning across a vista, and beyond, the plain where morning mists were drifting westward before the rising sun. Then, for the first time, I saw Smaranda weep; formerly, in my presence anyhow, she had been too proud for tears.

*'I l y avait des choses sentimentales là dedans,'* she explained later, pointing to the smoking ruin. I could well believe it. What letters she must have received from various sorts of men; what prayers and protestations from writers, artists, poets, princes, not to mention amorous lucubrations from archæologists and pedants, or amateurs of Roman art.

This past I cannot share and will not think of. I can only hope these memories will fade, be blown away, just as the smoke will be, the smoke that rises still above the smouldering embers of her castle, by the wind of a new day.

There were no human casualties, as might have been the case if the fire had broken out two nights earlier. The perfumes I had brought from London, with the exception of what the Queen had taken, were destroyed. A gallon or so of Roman Hyacinth has been dissipated; glass bottles, packed so carefully that not one was broken, although they had travelled far, have been melted, or perhaps exploded, in fierce heat; and their content, a radiant, yellow fluid, intriguing as an old liqueur, has boiled and bubbled, then exhaled its fragrance, not on Smaranda as intended, but on the ashes of the things she loved.

A mournful discovery has just been reported: in the basement were the charred remains of Pat. Ah Pat! If you had only prowled last night like other cats of your sex, size and strength, if any such exist; indeed, if you had been a little less respectable and austere, you might have reached a ripe old age, and left a numerous progeny behind you to haunt the tiles and wander in the woods. As it is, poor Pat, your death to some is the silver lining to a cloud; and your only monument is in the heart of my countrywoman, herself a true Victorian, British type, who saw in you a champion of virtue, stern and unbending, never distracted from the straight and narrow path by the frivolity and dalliance of this Latin land.

#### COMPILER'S NOTE

*During the eight months following the date of the last extract the entries in the diary are dull and tedious. Page after page is devoted to querulous comments on the ignorance and inertia of the War Office authorities in London. It must be admitted that Y- was a most tiresome subordinate. He proffered counsels of perfection, laid down the law in irritating fashion, and invariably explained defeats on the ground that his advice had not been taken. In fact, it was seldom sought, and such abilities as he had were wasted.*

*His criticisms reached those at whom they were directed in the form of official telegrams and dispatches. Some of the latter were read, more especially after Mr. Lloyd George became War Minister; and then, for the first time, accord-*

*ing to the writer, the real character of the problem presented by Smarandaland appeared to be understood. But it was too late; the mills of the World War worked slowly but ceaselessly and ruthlessly; the time had come for this little country to be crushed between the upper and nether millstones of Eastern Europe, between Slav and Teuton. Heaven was high, and Britain and France were very far.*

*The next selection from the diary gives an idea of the forces that were at work.*

THE CITY ON THE PLAIN. JULY 4 1916

I have just had a long and somewhat harrowing conversation with the Prime Minister. For months past military negotiations with Russia have been in progress, and now Allied diplomacy no longer coos, its voice has become strident, even menacing. French blandishments and promises of British loans continue, but are accompanied by Russian threats. I do not know what influences are at work in Russia to force the hand of this isolated little State. They can hardly be inspired by the General Staff, because, from a military point of view, the situation is worse, not better, than it was when the Grand Duke Nicholas described Smarandaland's intervention as — '*une folie furieuse*.' It is a curious coincidence that Russian policy should take this turn on the succession of M. Stürmer to M. Sazonoff as Prime Minister of Russia. Other things being equal, a German name should be a disqualification for that post at such a time as this.

The Prime Minister complains that none of his

conditions have been satisfied, and with some justice. We have not got 500,000 troops on the Salonika front, and if we had there are not sufficient roads for their forward movement except at a snail's pace. It is impossible to give guarantees for the delivery of munitions in Smarandaland, as those munitions must pass through Russia, where the shortage is serious and the railways are in a state of chaos. Nor can effective co-operation on the part of the Russian Army be counted upon; according to the Prime Minister, even if Russia had the will, she has not the power to undertake a vigorous offensive in Bukovina. His attitude towards Russia is a mixture of fear and contempt – the fear of a man whose country has been bullied for generations by an arrogant, all powerful neighbour; the contempt of a man of culture who, wrongly in my opinion, regards Russians as barbarians.

Nevertheless, it has been my duty to-day to endorse an ultimatum presented by the Russian Military Attaché. The General Staffs have fairly taken charge; it seems to me a most extraordinary procedure that the Prime Minister should deal direct with military representatives, and almost exclusively with them. He himself takes exception to this method, but it is forced on him by the Russians, who urge that he is also War Minister.

I use the word 'ultimatum' advisedly, because my instructions were quite formal to say 'now or never.' 'Now' means within the next few weeks. 'Never' means that if at any future date Smarandaland wished to join

the Allies, having refused to do so now, her overtures would be rejected. Presumably also, non-compliance with this ultimatum leaves the Russians free to violate the neutrality of Smarandaland, if thereby a military advantage could be secured. In other words, it is either alliance with France and Britain in spite of antipathy for Russia, or war with the latter. I wonder what Germany wants, and if there is any understanding between the pro-German elements in Russia and the Governments in Berlin and Vienna. If I were a German soldier I would prefer to have Smarandaland an enemy and fighting on the left flank of the Russian Army. Germany wants the corn and oil of this country; it would be cheaper to take these things by force from a weak State backed by a doubtful ally, than to buy them from that same weak State and, in addition, shoulder the responsibility for defending it during the remaining stages of the war.

My position is unpleasant: I can't tell the Prime Minister that, in my personal opinion, most of the men concerned in these transactions either do not understand the military situation or have designs against this country. It is impossible to do so for two reasons: in the first place, it is only my opinion and I have no business to be so irreverent; in the second, some of the gentlemen in question are my hierarchical superiors and the others are my colleagues. As a matter of fact, the Prime Minister is much too clever not to see through them; if he were not convinced that in the end we were going to win, he would tell the Russians to go to the Devil.

I am almost sure he is going to sign the Military Convention; and what troubles me most is that he will do this solely because of his belief in the British. He thinks we have the power to influence Russia and compel the Government in Petrograd to keep faith. The strategical plan is sound enough and will work, provided the Russians make their offensive simultaneously, and our forces at Salonika can contain the Bulgars. These are two 'ifs' of enormous and tragic significance. I feel intuitively that we are on the eve of a betrayal; but it is only an intuition after all, and junior Staff Officers should not deal in intuitions. The senior Generals shed theirs with their youth.

*THE CITY ON THE PLAIN. AUGUST 8 1916*

Some day the question may be asked — 'When is an offensive not an offensive?' The right answer is — 'When the enemy counter-attacks.' The day before yesterday our offensive on the Salonika front began. According to the Military Convention, Smarandaland is to declare war on and to attack Austria-Hungary ten days after the commencement of that offensive, that is to say on the 12th inst. Allied reports state that our operations are progressing favourably; unfortunately, there are two sources of information, and the enemy Press bureau is issuing a different account. Nevertheless, the Prime Minister is going to sign. He has got the idea that Bulgaria will make a separate peace, and is much impressed by a telegram from Marshal Joffre assuring him that not more than ten Austro-Hungarian divisions

can be brought against Smarandaland, and that five of these are of inferior quality. The archivists at home confirm this statement, and declare further that the report of an eye-witness in Bulgaria, announcing the presence of Turkish divisions in that country, is ridiculous. It is a case of omniscience at a distance, but of doubt and perplexity on the spot.

*AUGUST 18 1915*

The Convention has been signed. With my fellow military attachés I went to the Prime Minister's private residence at 12 noon. He asked me to sign first, and said that he had put himself in our hands, believing that our promises as to the delivery of munitions would be kept. If the munitions were the important part of this transaction I should be easier in my mind.

The French Military Attaché and I dined together and afterwards went for a walk. The streets of the Capital were crowded, the day being Sunday and the evening fine. Hundreds of people were seated outside the cafés, smoking, drinking, enjoying life in an orientalized Latin way. Many officers wearing uniform were in the interminable procession that sauntered slowly to and fro; with them were pretty, laughing girls, and men and women went in clusters, not in couples, as is the custom in our parks. They did not know what had been done this morning, and will not know for several days that Smarandaland has been 'brought in.'

Watching them pass I said to my French colleague - 'I feel like a hired assassin'; he replied simply - 'So do I.'

*ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS. SEPTEMBER 10 1916*

Bulgaria has not made a separate peace but, on the contrary, has joined forces with the non-existent (according to the archivists) Turkish divisions. Several German divisions also have arrived, as though by magic, on this front. The Bulgars have counter-attacked north of Salonika, and yet have had sufficient troops to spare for the investment and final capture of the fortress on the south bank of the Great River.

All went well at first: the armies of Smarandaland advanced on the left flank of the Russians, but the latter would not move; munitions arrived in dribbles, but nothing approaching the daily quota promised has yet been delivered. The operations are not going as laid down in the plan, but it is not the fault of these poor people. I am overcome by a sense of shame when I meet the Prime Minister or the King. A disaster is imminent and, I fear, unavoidable. A soldier of genius might snatch a victory, but is there one? A name has been mentioned and has brought a spasm of hope; but I have just heard that he is wounded. It is too much to expect that there is another; and yet one never knows. Staff Colleges turn out trained Staff Officers, not leaders; the latter are just as likely to be found among the popinjays who used to throng the streets of the City on the Plain. Sometimes there passed a serious face, nose aquiline, skin sallow, eyes dark and keen; why should there not be here a Julius Cæsar, the sort of man Suetonius wrote about? These people are



descended from Roman legionaries who fought with Severus and held Trajan's wall.

Life is far safer at Head-quarters than in the Capital; the latter is bombed three times a day by the enemy's airplanes, and by a Zeppelin at night. Proportionately to the area and population, it is as though 150 German planes came over London thrice daily, and twenty Zeppelins after dark. The destruction of life and property is appalling; but the pluck of the bulk of the inhabitants surprises me. I prefer, when not at the front, living in the city, which is only ten miles distant from Head-quarters, because of my house and garden there; in any case I will return to it to-night, as Smaranda is coming back. I had half feared, half hoped, and fully expected this would happen. She should arrive to-morrow morning and proposes to stay in her town house. I mean to put a stop to this mad proceeding. At 'Sleeping Waters' she should be fairly safe.

SEPTEMBER 12 1916

Smaranda's train arrived sixteen hours late, in the small hours of the morning. The Zeppelin followed it for several miles and dropped some bombs, fortunately without effect. Smaranda was in a state of complete exhaustion combined with an exaltation of spirit that cast out fear. She is proud of her country for having been brought in, and full of hope and ideas of glory. This is the atmosphere of Paris, and all very well in its proper place; but here she is running frightful risks.

Almost her first remark to me was – ‘Was I right to come?’ Of course, I lied and answered yes; who wouldn’t have in the circumstances! The absence of fear is admirable but most undesirable in a charming woman. Just as I arrived at her house this morning, a bomb fell some three hundred yards away in the same street; yet there we sat, behind cracked and broken windows, discussing the details of her hospital in the centre of the city.

I don’t think she realized how serious the situation is until I told her that Turks and Bulgars had invaded the region near the Great River’s mouth. And then I regretted having spoken, for she was really tired out, and broke down when she heard of Talisman and Adam-Klissi being overrun. We had spent happy days among those ruins, where she found *fouilles* and I kept off sheep dogs in the intervals of carrying paving stones. She has promised to sleep at ‘Sleeping Waters,’ and that is something gained; her town house might be hit at any moment.

So far there have been no signs of the hobgoblin. Also, the poets, professors and most of the politicians have left for a safer place.

OCTOBER 7 1916

On the black list of our Secret Service agent I have found three most intriguing names – those of our Minister, the Russian Minister and myself. My Chief is thoroughly amused; I don’t know what the Russian thinks. Not for the first time, I am sorry for the tax-

payers who are paying large sums of money for this sort of stuff. It may be necessary to have a Secret Service, but a really useful agent is a *rara avis* and born not made; the second-rate individual does more harm than good. The first-class agent should have a profession, or at least a hobby, and be well known on that account. Nor does any ordinary profession meet requirements: a business man is suspected always of pushing his own interests; soldiers and sailors are too obvious; doctors and ministers of religion may learn a lot, but must in honour bound renounce their calling if they take up this work; hairdressers lack sufficient social standing and ply their trade in public places. Prime Ministers no longer tell them secrets in the intervals of a shave.

The most promising profession seems to me to be that of an archæologist, because most would-be intelligent people profess to know a good deal about archæology; it is their hobby, and they include all the great ones of this earth. A man who is well informed on this subject can obtain access to any circle; no one suspects him, and he is welcomed by monarchs, statesmen and millionaires, as well as by their wives. The fact that he has dug up a buried city, opened a tomb, exposed the mummy of an Egyptian king, seems to unseal the most secretive lips and extort indiscreet admissions.

Next to archæology come good works, as a means of acquiring information. The relief of human misery makes a strong appeal to conscience-stricken magnates of all kinds, and brings those it employs into close contact with many sides of life. A man who combines

good works with archæology should have the opportunity of being a perfect Secret Service agent.

Such an one is my friend the American archæologist. He did a noble piece of work during the evacuation of Poland; what he does not know about his special subject is not worth knowing; he has friends everywhere whose influence is not merely social; lastly, he is a marvellous listener to whom the most tongue-tied talk. I met him yesterday and found him righteously indignant at the way this country has been treated. He is leaving shortly for Russia, which is quite the proper course, if he is what I suspect he may be. No information can be acquired here.

Bad news is the only news to hand: the armies of our latest Ally are retreating on every front. It is not their fault; God forbid that British troops should ever be placed in such an impossible situation.

OCTOBER 16 1916

Last night a Zeppelin bomb fell on my house and wrecked it partially. I had gone to bed at midnight after having had some friends to dinner. About 2 a.m. I was aroused by the now familiar droning sound of an engine overhead. A few seconds later a loud explosion made the house shake; it came from the neighbouring garden, that of the French Legation. I was congratulating myself on a narrow escape, when the floor of my bedroom rocked like a ship at sea, the windows and one door fell inwards, the lustre of electric lights fell with a crash from the ceiling, the shutters with a shower of

stones and broken glass were flung across the room. For a few seconds I lay inert and deafened; the acrid smell of some high explosive filled my nostrils and made me feel sick and giddy. The ensuing silence was appalling; for all I knew, I might be the only person left alive amid the wreckage. I pressed the switch of the light at my bed-head; it would not work. I then noticed that my face was bleeding, by the trickle of warm blood, and began to see dimly; it came as an intense relief to know I was not blind. I got out of bed but could not move at first, all the furniture seemed to have been piled up at my end of the room. And still silence; it gave a sensation of awful solitude. At last I heard the welcome sound of voices and approaching footsteps; they came from the direction of the servants' quarters. A glimmer of light shone through the second door, which leaned inwards still supported by one hinge. Fearfully and wonderfully arrayed, my old housekeeper, Madame Bitsa, stood outside, a candle in her hand. The first inquiry of this faithful soul was — '*M. le Colonel, est-il bien?*' and then she added that there were two slight casualties among the orderlies, who had, with herself and the cook, taken refuge in the cellar. I reassured her as regards myself but was still uncertain about young W —, my Staff Captain. He joined us at that moment, safe and sound, though a large fragment of the bomb had missed his head by a few inches. All was well therefore, or at least as well as could reasonably be expected.

The garden was a sorry sight, and it had been so

good to sit in a few hours earlier, when after a day of sultry heat we had dined beneath the trees. A crowd of people soon arrived, among them the secretary of the Prime Minister. The latter lives in the same street, and if there was any discrimination in the matter, that bomb must have been meant for him.

We entertained friends and inquirers of both sexes with cigarettes and cherry brandy; there was no prospect of the Zeppelin returning and gaiety prevailed. At 4 a.m. I went back to bed. The walls of the house were almost intact, only a corner had been wrecked. I had searched in vain for the policeman who was usually on duty in the garden and cursed him for being absent. This morning we found what was left of him scattered about beneath the trees. He had been standing near a sarcophagus I had brought from Adam-Klissi with the paving-stones; it also had been smashed into small pieces. This tomb of some old Roman warrior may have saved the house from more complete destruction, not to mention several lives. We had filled it with good soil and planted geraniums therein; and if, as I fancy must have happened, the bomb burst in it, the earth and its surrounding walls of stone had absorbed most of the force of the explosion.

For the brief period that is left before we will be compelled to leave the City on the Plain, I shall remain among the ruins of this once charming house. The weather is mild and draughts don't matter, while the chances are a million to one against another bomb. Moreover, to my great surprise, so says Madame Bitsa.

*NOVEMBER 1 1916*

One by one the main passes through the western mountains are being penetrated, and daily the pressure from the south becomes more deadly. A master mind is directing operations on the other side. I sit sometimes with a friend on the Head-quarter Staff and we follow the moves made on the map. It is like watching a game of chess played by a champion. Each blow is timed to perfection, each pause deliberate and purposeful. No doubt this German General's task is easy, but not so easy as it appears to us who know how utterly exhausted are the peasant soldiers, how ill-equipped and underfed. They got a chance the other day to prove their mettle and took it well: a German division advanced rashly through one of the gorges on the frontier; it was cut off, hemmed in on every side and, finally, exterminated. Women and children from the countryside joined in the slaughter, attacked the invaders with scythes and axes, released great boulders on the cliffs which hurtled down and crushed the men and horses crowding the narrow road below. But still the advance continued according to plan. Ten thousand German soldiers paid forfeit with their lives for the mistake of one subordinate leader. Such is war.

It is only in the subsidiary theatres that a General can display ability. The Western Front is so closely packed that manœuvre is impossible; it must be heart-breaking for an ambitious, able man. The real problem of this war, as I see it, is to settle what can and cannot

be done in the way of decisive action on the Western Front, and then to concentrate on the more promising subsidiary theatres. For this a supreme, co-ordinating authority is required. I hear that Lloyd George is thinking on these lines, and, in my humble opinion, for the purposes of a world war he is a better strategist than any of the professional soldiers. In a vast muddle, instinct like his may be a better guide than narrow competence.

*THE OIL FIELDS. NOVEMBER 15 1916*

Having realized the hopelessness of the position, the War Office has instructed me to destroy the oil fields of Smarandaland. It is rather a tall order, as, next to agriculture, oil extraction is the principal industry of this country. Moreover, most of the larger companies are run with foreign capital; the Standard Oil Company of America has large interests, also the Royal Dutch, so neutral Governments have got to be considered. Immense quantities of crude oil are stored in tanks, and these are to be burnt; the wells are as far as possible to be put out of action and the refineries destroyed. Compensation will, of course, have to be paid, and that will amount to many millions. Poor British taxpayers!

I have consulted the various managers with the sole exception of the Standard Oil man, who is expected to be difficult. They all say it is quite easy to burn the stocks; their principal preoccupation, in normal times, is to prevent them catching fire by accident. One or



two managers have pointed out, however, that the existence of these stores of oil in Smarandaland does not mean that they could be made available in Germany, because the difficulties of transportation are enormous, and two years would be required to transfer many tens of thousands of tons by rail. The wells are of two kinds - gushing, and those from which the oil is extracted with a dipper. The former are indestructible, they will gush whatever we may do to them, and it is their light grade of oil that the Germans most require. The latter can be choked so as to render fresh borings necessary; this latter operation would take three months to complete. These observations have been reported to the War Office, but my orders are still to go ahead.

The Prime Minister has consented, though most reluctantly, to this wholesale destruction. This morning he gave me five 'Orders' addressed to the local authorities, signed by himself and the Chief of Staff; on these it was clearly set forth that the bearer, who was to be nominated by me personally, had permission to destroy properties as indicated, also by me, and that the local military and police forces were to render all possible assistance. He certainly has played the game: without these formal orders, the soldiers and police would probably have backed the inhabitants in resisting an act of piracy, which, incidentally, would deprive them of their livelihood.

There are five main oil areas in Smarandaland, and armed with my five slips of paper, I proceeded this afternoon to the town where the offices of the different

# S M A R A N D A

companies are situated. Here I have established an advanced head-quarters, although of my several places of repair it is the farthest from the enemy. We are already in retreat.

We were half-way towards our destination when we stopped to offer assistance to another motorist, whose car had broken down. He proved to be the Standard Oil man, an ex-naval officer and a most intelligent person. I am sorry not to have made his acquaintance earlier. While Virgil and his chauffeur co-operated, we discussed the situation, and I showed him the order form affecting the area for which he was responsible, 'So you are going through with this, Colonel?' he said at length. 'I certainly am,' was my reply. 'Well, it's a wicked waste,' he murmured meditatively, and then went on - 'but if the British Government is going to pay, I'll help you.' I thought sadly to myself, the British always pay. His last remark was - 'I reckon God made oil to be burnt some time or another, and it makes no odds to me, if you are going to pay for it, when or where you burn my stuff.' And on this practical and pious note we parted.

## THE OIL FIELDS. DECEMBER 1 1916

Much has happened during the past week: the Capital has been evacuated, the oil fields have been burnt most thoroughly, and the armies are in full retreat. The instinct to destroy is strong in even the mildest mannered men, and, once started, some of the employés, who have worked in these industries for the greater part

of their lives, and have in fact grown up with them, burned and smashed with savage fury.

The spectacle presented by a large sheet of burning oil is most impressive. From the surface of the oil, red flames rise to a height of several feet; above these floats a bank of heavy smoke, on the top of which are violet flames that show more complete combustion. To the soldiers retreating by night through the foothills, this vast conflagration must have looked like an inferno.

Fortunately, the smoke did not drift across the town; in one case, some cattle in adjoining meadows were caught in it and suffocated. I shall not easily forget that smoke – it hung about for days after the burning ceased, and spread a sooty pall across the fields.

At nightfall, the aspect of the violet flames became satanic. They gave forth little light, these emanations from a sea of inky black, that heaved beneath them, while they writhed and flickered and darted upward tapering tongues. Their heat was overpowering, all-consuming: for several hundred feet above them the atmosphere was parched; high up, the vapours of the night condensed in fleecy clouds.

One of the order papers given me by the Prime Minister has already reached the Germans. They hold me responsible for what they call an act of vandalism and have put a price upon my head.

If they only knew – for once in my life I am fairly innocent.

*ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS. DECEMBER 5 1916*

This morning a patrol of Uhlans nearly earned the price that is on my head. I thought I had seen the last of the City on the Plain, for some time to come, when I left it two days ago. Then, I bade Smaranda a long farewell with sorrow in my heart. She insists on staying in her hospital, and, from a patriotic point of view, is quite right.

I had to return yesterday evening, however, for the reason that an officer, who has just come out from home to join my staff, was supposed to have been in the train, the last one, that entered the Capital from the North. Things happen in this country that happen nowhere else. Here was a city almost surrounded by the enemy; yet, on the eve of capture, a train full of travellers goes to it, and, for all I know, may have been the first one on this railway system to arrive punctually at its destination.

There was nothing for it but to go and get the newcomer out. I left Head-quarters yesterday evening in my car, and reached the city without incident. The streets were deserted and most of the shops were closed. I stopped at a furrier's, where I was well known, and was told that all was quiet and that no enemy troops had been seen. The proprietor seized the occasion to sell me a fur-lined coat, and I made the bargain of my life. The poor fellow was green with terror, not of the Germans, whom he was quite prepared to welcome, but of the Bulgars and the Turks.

Inquiries at the railway station, the municipal offices and the best known hotels proved fruitless; no one had seen a British officer. At my favourite restaurant, the fat *patron* was in a state of collapse. He urged me to take some dinner with him, and when I refused he brought up from his cellar the last two bottles of Cordon Rouge, 1904, a truly classic brand, and pressed them on me as a gift. He did not want such precious fluid to fall into the enemy's hands; either it would be as pearls before swine, or else it might inspire the German General to yet more doughty deeds. I accepted the bottles in that spirit. A man should always sacrifice himself in a good cause.

Madame Bitsa was still in my house and made me welcome. I had arranged for her to stay there, but she was nervous at the thought of being left alone; the cook had fled in a state of panic a few hours before. I didn't wonder at her fears: that silent city was getting on my nerves.

I called up Smaranda on the telephone, which worked far better than it ever had before in my experience of this country's telephones. She said she would be glad to have Madame Bitsa in her hospital.

By this time it was late at night, and I decided to wait till dawn. There is always something to be done in one's own house, and Madame Bitsa wanted time to pack and get me something to eat. With me were Virgil and my English batman, a Cockney boy from Battersea. The Daimler stood ready in the garden; at a minute's notice we could have slipped away. We were

really absolutely safe, because no one, except Smaranda, knew where we were.

After a short sleep, at about 5 a.m., I took a last look round. Some weeks before, an inventor had brought to me a jar of yellow powder, which he claimed was an explosive of such terrific force, that if the Allies used it they would straightway win the war. There are many inventors in Smarandaland, and I think I have met most of them.

On a label attached to the jar these words were written – ‘Keep in a dry, cool place.’ The contents looked like sulphur salts. I placed that jar together with a copy of our King’s Regulations on the table in the entrance hall; they should be the first objects to catch the eye of my successor in this house. If he swallows the salts they may do him good, one never can tell with these inventions, and the red book may improve his mind.

Having left two of the best women in Smarandaland together, we started up the Great North Road. At the last moment my courage nearly failed me: I did not want to face the ordeal of once more saying farewell to Smaranda. *Partir c’est mourir un peu*. But she was at a window when the car arrived, and I went up for a few minutes of inarticulate distress.

We were travelling at high speed along a straight stretch between open fields, when Virgil pointed to some horsemen some 600 yards ahead. There were about twenty of them altogether, and three had reined their horses so that they stood across the road. The light was good enough to see that they were German Uhlans.

'Sound your horn like the devil, go all out, and switch on your electric headlights,' I shouted to Virgil, who was driving. My batman and I got our rifles ready, and by the time we reached those Uhlans, the car must have been doing seventy miles an hour and the horn was braying like a dozen donkeys. No horses in the world would have stood their ground; the three in question reared up, backed off the road and threw the whole group into disorder as we swept past. My batman fired three shots, over the back part of the car, and got three hits; I myself, though one of the worst shots in the British Army, may also have bagged one. At least a hundred bullets must have whizzed past us or overhead; the car was hit in several places, but suffered no material damage.

About half a mile ahead, and round a bend, was a big bridge. My heart sank at the thought that the enemy might be holding it. But all was well, and, once across, we reduced speed to a sober fifty, and I reflected that the price on my head, though still unpaid, must surely be going up.

Needless to say the jolting had been violent. B —, my batman, who had been rummaging among the various packages we had brought with us, interrupted my meditations with an announcement — 'You'll be glad to hear, sir, that them two bottles of champagne ain't got broken.'

'Ah, B —, if you and I survive this war, you shall be guardian of my cellar, if I can afford one; and I will call you Simon, my cellarer and friend.'

I found the latest recruit safe and sound at Headquarters. He was profuse in apologies, but they were unnecessary. I owe to him, indirectly, a cheap fur coat, two bottles of champagne, the quietest evening I have spent for many months, and quite a thrilling drive.

*ON THE GREAT NORTH ROAD. DECEMBER 20 1916*

Not only have the armies retreated, there has been an exodus of refugees. These wretched people have been streaming up the Great North Road for some days past; now they are blocked by a corps of Russian cavalry advancing in the opposite direction. Women and children are dying by the score of cold and famine. It is difficult to distinguish the Russian soldiers from invaders. They and their horses are eating up the countryside like a swarm of locusts; by the time they meet the German cavalry nothing will be left. I don't believe there will be any fighting; both sides will soon go into winter quarters and watch each other till the spring of next year.

Behind our front wholesale destruction is in progress. We are burning farms, destroying factories, and making futile efforts to remove anything that could be of service to the Germans. Incidentally, the War Office has instructed me to burn the corn supplies we bought, and has suggested, helpfully, that by pouring oil upon them the burning process would be rendered easier. How to bring the oil and corn together is not explained. Most of the former has already been consumed in a very costly bonfire; the latter is not particularly inflammable



and is scattered all over the land. If Smarandaland consisted of a large tank of oil on the one hand, and on the other, a few yards off, of a barn filled with corn, the suggestion might be practical. I am wondering how to word a telegram which will make clear what should be obvious, and yet will not be thought sarcastic by the omniscient.

*THE GREAT RIVER. DECEMBER 28 1916*

Near the mouth of the Great River are two ports; in one of them I have established a Branch Office. I have a theory that the Germans will not take this place; it is without strategic value, and, already, they have got as much as they can digest. Going there a few days back, we lost our way in a wild region intersected by numerous water-courses and devoid of metalled roads. Night was falling when, to my great relief, we met a policeman, or to be more exact a member of the rural gendarmerie. He had a rather truculent appearance, and in ordinary circumstances I would not have trusted him a yard. But beggars can't be choosers and we took him as our guide.

I had been warned that bands of robbers, including deserters from the army, infested this district; and so we kept a sharp look out. My suspicions of our guide began to deepen when, by his direction, we turned towards the river. He insisted that he knew of a good road, but this to me seemed most improbable. The railway line lay on our left, and instinct as well as training inclined me to keep near that. His manner became more and more surly, and suddenly he turned round

and demanded a preposterous sum of money to take us to our destination. This decided me. The car was lurching down a slope and by my orders Virgil halted. I got out, seized the gendarme by the scruff of his neck, and for the first time in my life began to beat a man, and more than that, a minion of the law. He yelled and grovelled at my feet, while I adjured him in several languages to guide us faithfully or perish. Virgil was delighted, also B —; both would have joined in beating a rural constable as the rarest form of sport. On principle I am opposed to corporal punishment, but must confess to having found it most efficacious on this occasion. Ten blows with a stout stick transformed a blackmailer and the associate of a band of robbers into a penitent; he vowed by all his gods that he would sin no more, and addressed me as 'my lord.'

We got in safely and surprised our guide by giving him a meal and twenty francs. I hope and believe that never again will I resort to physical violence on a fellow creature. All the same, the experience is instructive. I have never been called 'my lord' before, and, unless I beat another man, I don't suppose I ever shall be again.

The river is full of corpses; it reminds me of a scene in India, during a plague.

*ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS. JANUARY 8 1917*

I have been ordered to go to Petrograd where an Inter-allied Conference is assembling 'to discuss war-policy, finance, supplies and co-operation.' It seems to me to be at least a year too late.

*A RAILWAY STATION IN SOUTH RUSSIA.*

JANUARY 12 1917

So far our journey has been made by motor, but here we take the train.

The town near by has been evacuated twice and still wears a forlorn deserted aspect. We, that is to say a Russian Prince, one of my Staff Officers and myself, dined in a little restaurant whose proprietor had been a *chef* in Paris. The Prince knows every corner in the town, his estate is near and he corresponds to a Lord of the Manor at home. After dinner, there still being a few hours to spare before the departure of the train, we strolled about the streets, and paused outside a private house where some one was playing on a piano. The melody being played as we approached was familiar: it occurs in Tchaikovsky's Concerto in B Flat Minor and is said to be based on a French song — '*il faut s'amuser, danser et rire.*' The unseen pianist played magnificently, there was nothing amateurish in this performance; whoever it was had both technique and a singing touch. It must be a perpetual consolation to play like that. The house was humble and stood right on the street. Impelled by curiosity to commit a breach of manners, I peeped through a window into the room whence the music came. It was simply and indeed poorly furnished except for the piano, a Blüthner, which was resplendent and evidently new. In a large chair by the fireplace was seated an old woman, a Jewess. Standing close to the piano was a girl, whose features,

though for a moment in repose, displayed the intense vitality of her race. The pianist was a boy scarcely out of his teens and a hunchback.

These three persons were quite unconscious of my presence at the window until the Russian joined me. No sooner had he seen them than he uttered an oath, went to the street door, pushed it open unceremoniously and strode into the room. The music stopped abruptly. The old woman leaned forward in her chair and stared at the intruder; her eyes reminded me of a tired, hunted animal's; there was fear in them and a fierceness unquenched by age. The girl moved so as to stand between the Prince and the hunchback, who had also risen; she faced the former and swayed so that I feared she was going to fall.

My Staff Officer understands Russian and translated hurriedly the dialogue that ensued. It appeared that this family, the mother and her two children, had returned without permission to their home. The daughter pleaded that they had nowhere else to live, were without money, and that her brother would die of exposure in a camp for refugees. The Prince was obdurate and brutal: they were accursed Jews, a social pest, spies, agents of the Germans. He wound up a furious tirade by ordering them to clear out at once.

I said to the Prince that it was literally murder to drive them out in winter weather. He laughed and said nothing would kill such vermin. I appealed to his love of music, and insisted that the boy was undoubtedly a great artist. He replied – 'We've got lots more as good.

But he shall play before he goes.' An order was rapped out and the hunchback sat down at the piano.

I have heard that concerto many times and have always, in spite of high-brow sneers, found some new meaning in it. Without an orchestra, the pianist could give free rein to his own interpretation. Listening to the wild theme in the third movement, I imagined some one fleeing for his life, and heard the shouts of the pursuers, the baying of dogs, the shrill notes of a horn — a Cossack dance became transformed into a man-hunt.

There was no mercy in this princely Jew-hunter; not even music had charms to soothe his savage breast. He summoned soldiers and policemen, and himself supervised the eviction.

I left him so employed, and am now writing in a well-warmed train feeling sick at heart. If, in default of human justice, these wretched people, or their relatives, resort to that wild justice called revenge and murder this man when they get a chance, the papers will dilate on the atrocity, and describe how malignant revolutionaries plotted the death of a most noble prince. Justice, like truth, lives at the bottom of a well; in Russia, at present, the landlords hold the dipper, but unless I am much mistaken they will not do so for long.

This railway station is some distance from the town. On the outskirts of the latter we passed a road-side calvary; our headlights lit up the crucifix, and on the steps we could discern that Jewish family, under the shadow of the cross.

PETROGRAD, FEBRUARY 20 1917

The Conference has just broken up and the representatives of the Allies are returning to Britain, France and Italy. It has been a carnival of hospitality and lies. The Russians have promised to make an offensive, but, in spite of assurances to the contrary, the new railways necessary for its execution have not yet been traced. The Allies have promised to supply munitions, in good faith no doubt, but for one reason or another, those munitions, or at any rate most of them, will never reach the troops. And poor Smarandaland, whose lot is inextricably bound up with that of Russia, will get the crumbs that fall from the spendthrift's table, after waste, muddle and corruption have run their course.

In society, the idea of a revolution is derided. One charming lady says it is impossible because the people are well fed. There may be something in this point of view, if it is correct. The soldiers get good rations, but they don't want to fight to earn their daily bread. I can't imagine how the masses live or how this country functions. No one, except the dancers at the opera, waiters in restaurants and the officials, appears to do any work. The cold is paralysing, mentally, morally and physically, and explains to me part of the Russian riddle. Petrograd is of course not Russia; it is an artificial city in every sense, a kind of Venice on the confines of the Arctic circle, designed by a man of genius to give a western outlet to a race of nomads, whose natural

affinities are with the East. The Balts, who at heart are Germans, and the Poles, who are Catholics and anti-Russian, have taken full advantage of the situation.

*MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 24 1917*

I am staying here for a few days, under instructions to pretend that the Allied Delegations are still in Russia. It is hoped by this means that a German submarine will not intercept the ship which is now taking them all home. I hope the plan will be successful, and to help it am going to the Opera to-night, the last performance before Easter.

On arrival at the hotel where we are staying, the manager informed us that not one single room was vacant. On receipt of a bottle of brandy he found one, from which I telephoned to the Governor of the Province, who came down himself to see us. Thanks to his intervention, we got four large bedrooms with bathrooms attached, and, apparently, they had been empty all the time.

Moscow is full of visitors from the provinces, merchants from Nijni-Novgorod and Odessa. This city is very unlike Petrograd and gives the impression of a great commercial and religious centre. To my great surprise, political meetings are being held and are well attended. A French journalist, whom I first met in the Balkans, has been telling me about a man called Lenin. He describes this individual as a demagogue with a remarkable power of evasion, who escapes by a back door or the roof when the police arrive. It is rumoured that

S M A R A N D A

Lenin will now return to Russia with the permission of the Germans. My French friend says his oratory is disappointing, that he is in fact – ‘*Un petit rien du tout*,’ and that Kerensky is the man.

MOSCOW, FEBRUARY 26 1917

The Opera, and especially the ballet, was wonderful: Chopin’s music, Mordkin as the principal male dancer, and a *ballerina* of seductive charms. She is said to be the most perfectly made female in Russia, and we certainly had an opportunity of forming an opinion: the least exiguous of her costumes would hardly have made a bathing-suit. We wound up the evening’s entertainment with a supper at the Hermitage Restaurant, an extravagant affair. The fair *danseuse* was present; she is a real Slavonic type and has never left her native land, for patriotic reasons. I wonder which side she will take if there should be a revolution. Her grace of movement is absolutely feline. An old French lady said to me – ‘*Elle est délicieuse mais un peu tigresse*.’ Perhaps she thought some warning was required.

All through this festive time in Moscow, I have an uneasy feeling that we were making merry on the edge of a volcano. Something is in the air. I have seen quite a lot of people who are not well fed.

SMARANDALAND, MARCH 19 1917

Now that the revolution has begun in Russia this country is between the devil and the deep sea. The King is one of the few people who keeps his head, the



others have become hysterical and one can hardly blame them. His Majesty says he has German nerves, but he is far from being a Prussian. Few men have made more sacrifices than this Hohenzollern prince; if the Allies are beaten he will lose everything.

I came back to prepare this country for the worst – an offensive in conjunction with the Russians, according to the decisions reached at the Allied Conference in Petrograd. The new situation in Russia may have altered plans, but I doubt it. The leaders of the revolution appear to be just as warlike as the Government of the Tsar; they might easily be more so; I was always afraid that M. Stürmer would make a separate peace.

To be quite frank, peace is what Russia needs, as does Smarandaland; neither country is, in my opinion, capable of an offensive. It appears that Lenin's popularity is mainly due to peace-talk.

I will see how events develop, and pay a visit to the Front, before I make up my mind. One thing is certain – I cannot, once again, be a party to forcing these helpless people into unavailing slaughter. The War Office may know more about this theatre than I do, but my conscience is mine own.

*SMARANDALAND, APRIL 8 1917*

Were it not for the fact that America has joined us one would be tempted to despair. The plight of the soldiers on the Front is bad enough, but that of those in the back areas beggars description. Literally thousands are dying daily from typhus and other maladies.

The Russians are better off than the Smarandalanders because in the first place they are better fed — most of the food supplies are brought from Russia. These invaders, for that is how they are regarded, seem to have come to stay. They are pleasant, easy going people provided they get all they want. It is no uncommon sight to see a burly Russian soldier nursing a baby at a cottage door, the owner of the cottage, and the baby's presumptive parent, being on that sector of the Front allotted to the army of Smarandaland. This sort of thing does not create good will in the right quarters.

A few days ago, I was motoring behind the Front when a Russian officer hailed my car and asked me for a lift. He proved to be a young Captain of Artillery and most intelligent. I asked him about the effects of the revolution in the army; he replied that the majority of the soldiers were revolutionaries, and that, in a sense, he was one himself. I inquired what would happen to the Tsar, and his response was a significant gesture — he passed his hand across his throat and made a sharp guttural sound. The same performance was repeated in regard to the Tsarina. The little Tsarevitch would be spared, so he believed, and might one day be Emperor. As for the Grand Duke Nicholas, like most Russian soldiers, for the former Commander-in-Chief he had the profoundest admiration, and said that the Grand Duke, if he chose, could live in peace and comfort on his estates.

How far this officer presents the facts correctly it is hard to say. There are few facts in all this vast confu-

sion. Some of the more recent are that several Russian Generals have been murdered, and that soldiers' councils have been established in most units.

Revolutionary infection has not touched the army of Smarandaland. The hatred of Russia and of all things Russian is so intense, that imitation is precluded in any shape or form.

*SMARANDALAND, MAY 19 1917*

Summer has come and with it some relief; sunshine is the best remedy for typhus. Advantage is being taken of this respite to urge the Government to undertake offensive action. The new Russian Government, or for all practical purposes M. Kerensky, has been persuaded into this suicidal course. I cannot agree that it is justified on either political or military grounds. It is doomed to failure, and the consequences will be grave.

As my protests are unavailing and my opinion is unheeded, I have telegraphed to London asking to be recalled.

The temporary Capital of Smarandaland is full of Russian troops, whose temper can best be illustrated by the following incident:—A certain Rakovsky had been put in prison, by order of the Prime Minister, for seditious conduct. On learning this, a body of Russian soldiers marched to the jail, broke open the gates and released Rakovsky, who is now at large.

An army that interests itself in politics speedily disintegrates; but soldiers who act in this way are more dangerous to their own leaders than to the foe.

During my last visit to the Front I came across many indications of fraternization between the Russians and the Germans and Austrians opposed to them. Inter-course, by means of written communications and word of mouth, was regular and frequent; the guns were comparatively silent; a truce, with occasional interruptions, might have been arranged.

In my view, this state of affairs is likely to do more harm to the enemy than to ourselves. After all, if revolution is contagious the Germans may become infected, as there is reason to believe some Austrian units are already; whereas the Russians are to this extent immune, that they are slowly recovering from the disease though still unfit to fight. An offensive will rally the enemy, break the spirit of the Russians, and if its failure is complete, as, so far as I can see, it must be, the new Government will be overthrown, and Heaven knows what will happen then.

Kerensky goes about like a recruiting sergeant calling for men to fight in 'Battalions of Death.' This is far easier work than ruling, which, presumably, is his job.

*SMARANDALAND, JUNE 4 1917*

The War Office is sending out some one to relieve me; he should arrive in a day or two, and I will start for home as soon as I have handed over. In the absence of Smaranda, my best friends are the Royal Family, the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister. I shall be sorry to say good-bye to them and to most of my staff; otherwise, without a care and with very few regrets I

shall emerge from this backwater into the main stream of the war. Floating down that stream are many pots, some of earthenware, others of brass, and when they clash together the earthen pots get smashed. It is the same with nations as with individuals.

PETROGRAD, JUNE 16 1917

Our journey from Smarandaland lasted eight days instead of the usual five. The train was crowded, but fortunately for me I travelled in comparative comfort with an eminent French Socialist and a Russian Menshevik, both great orators. A saloon was allotted to these distinguished politicians, and they admitted me fraternally. Their conversation was quite entertaining: they discussed the revolution from the angle of men who had gained by it an agreeable notoriety and prominence, but they were decidedly apprehensive lest it might go too far. I gathered from them that one can have too much of even a good thing, and that 'nothing too much' should be the motto of all workers in the cause.

While we were passing through Bessarabia, the Frenchman, looking pensively through the window at fields of waving corn, remarked – 'I imported 7,000 rifles into this country in the year 1907.' 'I wish you would let us have even half that number in 1917,' observed the Russian. I inquired, innocently enough, why he, the Frenchman, had acted thus in 1907; he answered simply – '*Dans un bon but révolutionnaire.*' Then both of them were silent; no doubt meditating

how they could explain, at the next big station, the difference between 1907 and 1917.

At most of the large cities they made speeches to enormous crowds, and there was not a little jealousy between them. The Russian had in his favour the fact that he spoke a language the audiences understood. His speeches were translated to us while we sat in the saloon behind drawn curtains; but after a few days we knew them pretty well by heart. He always wound up with a reference to his state of health — the doctors having told him, so he said, that he had only three months to live. 'Can I, a man with one foot in the grave, betray the people?' was the question put in every peroration. Each crowd roared out an emphatic 'No,' like a trained chorus, and the dying man beamed with smiles; he certainly looked a cheerful martyr. '*Quelle blague*,' observed the Frenchman bitterly when, for the fifth time, the interpreter translated this passage to us amid a tempest of applause. I tried to console him by saying that the crowds liked his speeches also, although they could not understand a word. I was sincere, for he, while speaking, tied himself in knots, and with his beard and tinted glasses presented a most extraordinary spectacle. The workmen and peasants, and above all the women, stared at him with fascinated eyes (he is ugly enough to take a place among Smaranda's learned men), and I can't help thinking that these superstitious folk believed him to be possessed of an evil spirit, which was being cast out in their presence at the railway station.

Old and young alike looked as if nothing would sur-

prise them after the experiences of the war; they grinned with pleasure, listening to and gazing at these two loquacious travellers – until the Russian, as in duty bound and in the 1917 spirit, talked of glory and love of country; then they scowled. Quite evidently, these two themes were unpopular and associated with mismanagement, corruption, and useless slaughter.

At the Embassies of the Allied Powers there is a not unnatural nervousness; no one knows what is going to happen. As a matter of fact, they never did know what was going on, but now they admit their ignorance.

In the hotels, foreigners have rallying spots where they arrange to gather in case of attack by night. I was told on arrival that, as the senior British Officer, my room would be well suited for this purpose; but I declined the honour, and gave strict orders to the faithful B – not to wake me up except in case of fire.

The streets are crowded, also the churches and the two cathedrals. I attend these latter on account of the singing; moreover, one sees the people, or at least a large number of them, in a frame of mind that makes me, even at this eleventh hour, wonder whether there will be a real, red revolution.

If the Government would sit down and do nothing, I still believe the situation might be saved. Ninety per cent. of Russians cultivate inactivity, and in the circumstances it would be masterly. The armies would continue on the front, and might even retaliate if attacked; while if half the efforts now being made to prepare for an offensive were devoted to improving the lot of the

poorer classes, there would be little disorder in the towns. These views have been expressed to me by several Russians and foreigners who know this country. They are regarded as *défaitistes*, while the optimists who prophesy a great and glorious victory go on their way rejoicing. Some of the latter are too intelligent to believe what they say: they may have begun by cheating themselves, but have since discovered that it pays better to cheat other people.

If I were the German Commander on this front I should pray for an Allied offensive. Perhaps he does, or if not that he may be encouraging the Russians, by other means, to commit suicide. His position must be difficult: he hasn't got enough troops himself to attack our positions, and his men are getting out of hand from inaction. Unquestionably, the fraternization with the Russians has affected many of his units, but that would cease if they were attacked.

A very well-known Russian General admits the offensive cannot succeed; but he says the only way to prove this is to try. And the ghastly part of the whole business is, that this demonstration of the obvious will cost at least one hundred thousand lives.

Lenin is here and very active. I haven't either seen or heard him. The French journalist says he will be arrested shortly, and that everything is going well.

STOCKHOLM, JUNE 23 1917

I am travelling in the same train and in the compartment adjoining that occupied by my friend the Ameri-



can archæologist. If we had tried to arrange this we should have failed; not all the influence of two Embassies could have achieved so mutually agreeable an arrangement.

His work may have been, I imagine, to make a forecast of events on information obtained in high places. As now there is nothing but conjecture to go upon, and as anyone can obtain the kind of information, about troop movements, etc., that Intelligence Departments want, he has, presumably, been recalled.

This morning we visited the Museum, and saw a lovely wooden Virgin recently discovered in an attic.

*LONDON, JULY 17 1917*

I am in the black books of the War Office, and am to be sent to some distant theatre; no place is too far away. For a junior officer it is better not to prophecy, and fatal to be right.

A friend of mine introduced me last night to the Prime Minister in the House of Commons. He (the Prime Minister) spoke of the Russian offensive, and quoted the latest news to hand, according to which all is going well. In reply, I also made a quotation – the famous retort of his predecessor – ‘Wait and see.’ He told me I was a pessimist, but, quite clearly, has some doubts about the optimists, or at any rate their reports.

The Manchu Emperor has abdicated. He is the Chinese counterpart of King Constantine of Greece, and I wonder if he has his Venizelos in Feng-Kuo-Chang.

LONDON, JULY 25 1917

A full Inter-Allied Conference has assembled in Paris — 'to discuss the Balkan situation . . . in view of a probable collapse of Russia.'

I have been ordered to proceed to Palestine.

TARANTO, AUGUST 7 1917

Just before leaving London I received a letter from Smaranda, who was sent away from her hospital by the Germans and is now in Switzerland. I had no time to go and see her, though on the journey to this Italian port we were so close to one another. The transport leaves to-night for Alexandria.

Liberia has declared war on Germany. No doubt Smarandaland knows by now that another neutral state has followed her example. I can only hope this last alliance will help more effectively to win the war. It is almost exactly twelve months since I signed that Convention.

#### COMPILER'S NOTE

*For some months after his arrival in Egypt, T—'s diary consists mainly of short entries, from which it appears that he was encamped for several weeks in the desert, and then took part in the advance which culminated in the capture of Jerusalem.*

*During this period he wrote a series of long letters to Smaranda which, at her bidding, were worked up into sketches. Two of these, one called 'Tu-whit, tu-who' (describ-*

ing a forest scene and an imaginary owl, for no such bird can ever have existed), and another entitled 'The Keys of Jerusalem,' are included in Part Two of this volume.

Subsequently to the occupation of the Holy City, he commanded a Brigade on the Mount of Olives, and the following extract from his diary reveals his train of thought.

THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, JANUARY 15 1918

Life in the Holy City, or in Bethlehem, makes the religious become fanatical and confirms the cynical in their unbelief. On this hill-top it is different. The views, and there are many, are sufficient in themselves to soften the most callous minds and to induce serenity. I cannot be too grateful to the enemies who sent me into exile here.

Looking east, a little before sunset, the hills of Moab might be a rampart of blue stone, with here a bastion and there a turret, surmounting glacis slopes. Across the blue lie purple scars marking ravines, and silver streaks where torrents rush down to the sea. At this hour the Dead Sea spreads out like a shield, dull yellow at its centre, and red as a blood-orange along the farther shore.

When the sun sinks below the Mount of Olives, a shadow falls with startling suddenness; for a few minutes one can still perceive the distant hills, black now and grim, and at their base no more a yellow shield, but a cold grey expanse bordered along its western edge by dark green scrub, where valleys end, and

sombre cliffs. Of all the scenes I have beheld this is the most forlorn.

The ground falls steeply to the Dead Sea. From the summit of the Mount one looks down on a tangle of white ridges and hillocks of fantastic shape, which glimmer when the moon is up, but which on moonless nights are lost in an impenetrable darkness. And, staring into these black depths, young sentinels may remember Bible classes, and think that they are on the brink of the pit described as bottomless, where sinners go, according to the Scriptures. Either from fear or recently acquired mysticism, these watchers of the Eastern night don't often fall asleep.

Westward the view includes the Holy City, some hills beyond and, in the far distance, glimpses of the sea. On this slope of the Mount of Olives is the Garden of Gethsemane, where it is good to sit at sunset.

This evening, on my way to 'The Garden,' I met the Patriarch of Jerusalem, in whose house I am living. He is an old man of small stature with a long, white beard, and is entitled to be called 'Your Beatitude.' I don't think he likes us much; we certainly have disturbed his quiet life, and the war has prevented him from going to Damascus, where he usually spends the winter months. All the same, he has been kind and hospitable, especially to the private soldiers. About these latter he began by quoting St. Augustine, and found them more angelic still when they cleaned up his courtyard.

My men are Londoners, quick-witted, willing, brave,

and, if one takes them the right way, altogether charming.

His Beatitude and I sat for awhile together in silent contemplation, and then began to talk about the life of Christ. He rather led me on, an easy thing to do at any time, and, when I had held forth for about ten minutes, expressed surprise at my knowledge of the subject. I informed him that I had a most religious mother. His answer was that that was a great blessing for which I could never be too grateful, and went on to ask what books I had studied in addition to the Bible. I told him the plain truth, viz. that most of the sentiments I had expressed, and more especially those which had evoked his remark that I possessed *une âme religieuse*, were taken almost textually from Renan's famous book. To my surprise he was not shocked; in fact, I rather gathered he had read it also, although it is on the index of the Orthodox Greek Church.

These eminent ecclesiastics lead pleasant lives: they seem to get the best of both worlds – dignity, power and comfort in this one, and assurance as regards the next. My sympathies are with the lower ranks, and in particular with the young, ambitious men. Sidney Smith, writing of the sloth, says that this animal lives suspended, or in suspense, like a young clergyman distantly related to a bishop. It must be awful and as bad as being a junior officer. In all professions it is a case of the higher the better rank.

Nevertheless, the Patriarch is good and simple. Perhaps, although free from personal worries and

S M A R A N D A

ambitions, he feels for others, and thereby gets his fill of sorrow in this perverse world.

I told B — I had been talking with the Patriarch, and he said — ‘Why can’t he keep a longer bed?’ This article of furniture is unsatisfactory: it resembles a baby’s cot. I sleep in it and, since it is about a foot too short, I wake up every morning with my feet protruding and half frozen. B — has tried to lengthen it with chairs and boxes, but so far without success. It makes me bad-tempered and him anxious, for while I use the patriarchal couch he sleeps on my camp bed.

*JERICHO, FEBRUARY 21 1918*

We have taken Jericho, and I lost quite a number of good men in the process. To look at, this fly-blown village is not worth the bones of a single Grenadier. The worst of it is that the soldiers in this war are not Grenadiers of the old type: they are, or at least many of them are, highly intelligent young fellows with the capacity to lead a useful life.

I have just received my home mail. There is a letter from Smaranda and one from the Prime Minister of her country. He has resigned, so now Smarandaland will make a separate peace.

*A VALLEY ON THE ROAD TO SAMARIA, MARCH 28 1918*

A telegram has come ordering me back to Europe, to Versailles, where I am to be attached to the Supreme War Council.

What a change it will be from these surroundings.

The spring in Palestine is a riotous season, one can almost hear the grass and flowers grow. An expert tells me there are sixty-five varieties of rock plants in this valley, and I can well believe him; they make a lovely spangled carpet.

My groom, F —, is very disappointed not to be coming with me and B —. He seems to expect that the war will soon be over, and wants me to ride my favourite horse in triumph through Berlin, with himself on the other one in attendance.

I am sorry to be leaving in many ways. Presumably my friends have triumphed, whoever they may be. I never have the least idea of the effect I make on other people.

*A JAPANESE DESTROYER, APRIL 1918*

I assisted last night at a tragedy of the sea. My host, in whose cabin I am now writing, is the Commodore of a Japanese Squadron in the Mediterranean, and his destroyer, together with seven others and two British sloops, is convoying a number of transports taking troops back from Palestine to France.

We left Alexandria yesterday afternoon, and towards midnight, when I was going to bed, two loud explosions made the vessel shake. There could be no doubt what they were, and I began to put on my clothes again. B — joined me a few seconds later, and was followed by a Japanese cabin boy who announced tersely — 'Submarine attack.'

On reaching the deck I found the most perfect

order: the Japanese sailors stood silently at their posts, the guns were trained to fire at a near target, and the destroyer, in company with two others, was circling at top speed round the ship that had been hit. In the distance, but clearly visible in the brilliant moonlight, were the other transports and escorting warships going full steam ahead on an altered course.

A Japanese sailor came up to me and, with a bow that would have done credit to a courtier, held out two wads of cotton-wool, at the same time pointing to his ears. I bowed my thanks for this consideration, and indicated that B – would also need the same protection for the drums of his ears.

The transport that had been torpedoed looked like a wounded animal; it had heeled over slightly, and was sinking by the stern. Fortunately, the sea was calm. Across the moonlit water floated the sound of voices; the men were streaming down the gangways into boats, and cursing their bad luck. For two hours the disembarkation proceeded without a hitch, and there were no further signs of submarines. Occasionally we passed close alongside and exchanged a few words with the Captain of the transport, who was directing operations from the bridge.

Towards 2 p.m., he announced that he himself would leave the ship, with the remainder of the passengers and crew, on the next trip to the sloops and destroyers that were standing by. I had scarcely conveyed this message to the Japanese Commodore when the stern of the transport jerked downward, the bows rose clear above



the water, several black objects were hurled from the bridge against the funnel – they were of course human forms – and with a horrid, sucking sound, the great ship dived and disappeared, leaving an empty stretch of sea.

Ten officers and seventy men were drowned out of a total of more than three thousand. If only the ship had stayed afloat five minutes longer these eighty victims would have been saved.

When the last plunge occurred, a Japanese sailor standing near me uttered a hoarse cry; I turned to look at him, and his eyes were full of tears. Otherwise, so far as I could see and hear, there was no comment; each man went silently about his work; the destroyer darted to and fro in search of survivors; a few final instructions were signalled to the vessels which were returning to Alexandria with the rescued, and we resumed our course.

To-day a heavy sea is running. Thank goodness it was calm last night. We came up with the rest of the flotilla about noon, and now we are making sixteen knots and heading west for Malta.

The Commodore is sleepless. We had a talk this morning, and he told me that the course we took from Alexandria had been laid down some time before we started. In his opinion, no one on shore should know the course, which should be left entirely to the man responsible for the convoy.

A diet of pickled fish, rice and sherry is making me feel bilious; and B – will think I'm seasick, as he is himself.

VERSAILLES, APRIL 13 1918

I arrived here to-day at lunch-time. A most distinguished company was gathered round the table – Lloyd George, Clemenceau, Lord Milner, Sir Henry Wilson, General Foch, and other lesser lights.

‘Palestine must be a most romantic land,’ observed a well-known politician. ‘More mystical than romantic,’ was my response. ‘Good word that – mystical, by Jove; I must note it for a speech,’ and he produced a notebook.

This war is like a giant polypus: its tentacles extend to all the corners of the earth. Here I am at the heart, and hope that the light talk I heard to-day does not represent its beats.

VERSAILLES, JUNE 18 1918

The Supreme War Council was brought into existence when it became clear that the Allies had no joint military policy, and its principal function is to frame such a policy. With this object in view, it includes the Prime Ministers of Great Britain, France, and Italy, who are advised by Military Representatives of all those Powers and of America.

Decisions are reached after consultations with experts and discussions which cover the whole field of international affairs. No other body, and certainly no individual, has access to the same amount of information, or has the time and opportunity to examine adequately all the problems involved. It would seem, therefore,

that its decisions should be the best attainable, and, consequently, should be final and authoritative.

So much for theory. On paper, the Supreme War Council is an admirable body; in practice it doesn't work. It is neither supreme, nor is it often consulted. It does not even co-ordinate and decide the distribution of man power and war material between the different theatres. It is not yet clear where its responsibility begins and ends; whether it is a purely advisory body or executive as well. We are face to face with an old problem – the relations between a Government and a Commander in the field. But this present problem is infinitely complicated by the number of Allied and Associated Powers. It is hard enough for any democratic Government, acting alone, to conduct a war. When there are several, the difficulties become appalling.

There are two alternatives to the Supreme War Council – a dictator, or what in the end would amount to the same thing – the acceptance by the Allied States of one of their number as the predominant partner.

If a man suitable for the position of dictator does exist, for his own sake he had better hide his head. There would be at least a dozen candidates for the post, each with a following, and whoever was selected would be attacked by the others until he disappeared. We have gone as far as possible in this direction by instituting unified commands in the main theatres.

Germany may be regarded as the predominant partner on the other side. But Germany's contribution to the war is far greater than that of any of her allies, and

indeed of all of them put together. This is not the case with the Allied and Associated Powers, whose emulation is sometimes tainted with jealousy.

So we shall muddle on, and in view of our immense resources, especially now that America is with us, we cannot lose. The Germans missed their golden opportunity in 1914, when they did not take Paris and the Channel ports. Without these latter, even now, we could not maintain the civilian population and the armies in the field.

It is the custom of officers who are not attached to the Supreme War Council to scoff at that institution. All the same, few refuse appointment to it, and for obvious reasons – the work though hard is interesting, one gets a bird's-eye view of the whole war and, from a material point of view, there never was a 'cushier' job. Some very senior Generals have refused to come here, but they are well looked after wherever they may be – like the Patriarch.

*VERSAILLES, JULY 25 1918*

In all theatres the enemy shows signs of cracking. While their offensive operations are in progress, large numbers of German soldiers surrender. Blockade and economic pressure have begun to tell. Austria-Hungary has been for some months past out of the picture, and the Bulgars will soon have had enough of King Ferdinand and the war. In Turkey we are fighting space and climate. I wish we could have made as big an effort against Constantinople.

# S M A R A N D A

Perhaps this year there will be peace. It will come with quite a shock to many. What will they feel like leading humdrum lives at home, without the daily stimulus of war news, often without an occupation and the financial independence that most of them are now enjoying for the first time in their lives? The past four years have worked a transformation; they have demoralized thousands of men and women, made them extravagant and restless, taught them new ways. And no one more so than myself. What am I going to do? I wonder.

Smaranda is returning to her country to face her foes. They are attacking her because she stayed in the City on the Plain after the German occupation. The last time I saw her there was in a hospital so crowded out with sick and wounded that some lay on the stairs. Some one had got to stay to tend them; and who better than this gifted woman could set the example that was needed.

The censorious are always with us. It is their envious part in life to suspect those they do not understand. Where there is glamour they look for a blemish, and hope to find a canker in every rose. They first invent and then pursue a scandal, by devious tracks as blurred and faint as footprints on a lawn.

*VERSAILLES, AUGUST 11 1918*

Foch has been promoted to the rank of Marshal of France. I have always thought that this rank was reserved for the first French General who crossed the

Rhine. He may do that sooner than we think. The German Army is like a broken sword: it can still wound, but each time a blow is struck with it, the fissures widen, and the fragments multiply; soon there will only be a haft for Hindenburg to hold.

The Czecho-Slovaks have revolted: they would have done so three years back if they had had the prospect of support from the direction of the Balkans. I remember a Russian colonel prophesying the downfall of the Dual Monarchy nearly five years ago, as we rode together from the battlefield of Kumanovo, where the Serbs, the advanced guard of Panslavism, had routed the Turks. Isvolsky also, just before his death, at his own dinner table in Paris, declared that one certain consequence of the war would be the smashing of that 'mediæval bibelot,' Austria-Hungary, and that in its place would be set up 'an ugly mosaic of small States.' Most Russians possess curious powers of divination in affairs other than their own.

The French have evidently got some secret information about the situation in Bulgaria. They are pressing for an offensive which, on the face of it, would be impracticable, unless the Bulgars want a pretext to conclude a separate peace.

A declaration has been issued to the Russian people stating that the British Government has 'no intention of interfering in Russian politics, or of infringing the territorial integrity of Russia.' I hope we will keep our word.

VERSAILLES, SEPTEMBER 29 1918

Bulgaria has succumbed. The internal situation there must be terrible; it always is in peasant states after a long war.

My friend the Yorkshireman came to see me this afternoon. He wants to return to Bulgaria, where he has large concessions. There is more in this, probably, than meets the eye, but I have given him two good letters of introduction, one to our people and the other to the French. The recipients will curse me, but, like myself, they may take a fancy to this burly, frank adventurer, and give him the facilities he wants.

Damascus should be taken in a day or two; Aleppo will soon follow. The only enemies in Syria are time and space.

Germany's *Drang nach Osten* is at an end; so is the World War. The conflagration started in South-eastern Europe, and is dying down there for lack of fuel. I hope it is burnt out; but the embers are still smoking, and the warlike spirit of the Balkan races is inextinguishable.

VERSAILLES, OCTOBER 20 1918

I have been ordered to proceed to Mudros with the terms of an armistice between ourselves and the Turks. I say 'ourselves' advisedly, because, in this particular instance, we seem to be taking matters into our own hands. A British Admiral is conducting the negotiations, although the victory was won on land. This is more logical than it might appear: for the past four

years, the fleet has been nearer to Constantinople, the heart of Turkey, than Allenby's victorious army can be for some months yet.

*ON BOARD A BRITISH BATTLE CRUISER, MUDROS,*

OCTOBER 27 1918

My journey to this harbour has been varied: by air from London to Paris; thence by train through Rome to Brindisi, where a destroyer met and took the three of us, a Naval Officer, B —, and myself, up to the eastern end of the Gulf of Corinth and through the canal, a long straight cut, which impressed B — enormously, although a somewhat obvious construction. At the farther end we were transferred to a 'Scout,' and reached Mudros late in the evening of yesterday.

R — Pasha, the principal Turkish delegate, is an old sailor; he commanded a Turkish cruiser called the *Hamidieh*, which chased a Serbian transport I had the misfortune to be in during the war of 1913. His great difficulty is to maintain communication with his Government. The Turkish wireless is not working well, perhaps because the German Staff has left. Some British marines are being landed on the coast of Asia Minor to repair the Turkish telegraph wires, in spite of the fact that, technically, we are still at war. No clearer proof of the collapse of Turkey could be forthcoming.

R — would sign anything if only the British were concerned; but the bare idea that the Greeks may enter Constantinople as conquerors fills him with despair. There might still be a slaughter of these latter.



S M A R A N D A  
*MUDROS, OCTOBER 30 1918*

My instructions were that the first four articles of the Armistice terms had to be signed, but that the remaining thirteen didn't matter much. R — has swallowed the lot with slight amendments, also a cocktail. Am starting back to-morrow at dawn.

*SALONIKA, NOVEMBER 1 1918*

I returned by this route, as the War Office wanted some verbal communications made to our Commander-in-Chief at Salonika. The first part of the journey from Mudros was through a violent storm, which cleared away as we entered the Gulf of Salonika. The evening was one of the most perfect in my experience. Olympus looked superb against the Western sky, a fitting habitation for the Gods.

I said to B —, 'Look at that mountain on our left; you might pass by here twenty times and not see the top for clouds. Besides, it is a famous spot, and you can tell them all about it when you get home.' B — cast a careless glance on the rose-pink summit of Olympus and replied — 'I don't think so much of that, sir, but that canal we come through was fine.' Then he added as a kind of after-thought: 'I suppose the Germans made it.' German efficiency must have been preached in the elementary schools of Battersea before the war. B — has a hero, and he is neither a Grand Duke nor a Monarch, not even a Patriarch. All the celebrities B — has met he describes as nice, civil-spoken gentlemen, but his hero is John Burns.

VERSAILLES, NOVEMBER 9 1918

Our return journey was more eventful than the outward one. We motored from Salonika across the mountains of Albania to Santi Quaranta, a port on the Adriatic I had known in the old days. Here I found two Americans, the directors of the American Red Cross in Italy, waiting for a means of crossing the Adriatic, and invited them to come with me on an Italian destroyer. Half-way across the engines broke down, and were only got going again after dark. We then ran on to a sand-bank some seven miles south of Brindisi, our destination. Another destroyer came to our rescue, and eventually we arrived in Brindisi at midnight, nine hours late, and of course missed the train for Rome. This was just as well, as there was an accident on the railway, involving the train we should have caught, and several passengers were killed.

The terms of an armistice with Germany are the sole topic of conversation, and a wide diversity of opinion is expressed. I think it is correct to say that the civilians here wish to impose much harsher conditions than the majority of responsible military men. As usual, words are being misused: an armistice is a cessation of hostilities, often temporary, but which may endure until peace is established; what the civilians are thinking of and want is an unconditional surrender. They may be right, if for no other reason than that they can dictate any terms they choose, and Germany will have to accept them. After the revolution in Berlin,

the German High Command is, for a time at least, utterly helpless. Moreover, it looks as if the German Empire were disintegrating: the declaration of a Bavarian Republic is most significant.

I should have thought that our best course now would be to encourage these disintegrating tendencies, and not to rally the Germans once again, by imposing terms so harsh that they will be driven to desperate courses, with the result that a militarist Prussia may come to be regarded as the saviour.

We have talked a lot about a Supreme Command in time of war; now we shall want a Supreme Intelligence to make the peace. What a pity it is that really first-class brains keep out of politics. Perhaps it is because they hate the dirt, or the publicity and all the ignorant criticism that goes with it. The most critical people in the world are prigs, or those who have a little learning and do not realize how dangerous it is. I am a resigned believer in democracy, but it certainly breeds prigs. So much so, that our overpopulated world contains an unduly high proportion of men and women with a mission, self-begotten and self-conferred, to manage every one else and everything except their own unruly tongues and pens. Heaven knows, I myself am not the least among these sinners; but I should like to meet a really great man. To do so would test one's nature, discover jealousy and fear, expose the pettiness that makes most of us prefer the company of a charlatan, and mystery to light.

*VERSAILLES, CHRISTMAS 1918*

As is only fitting at this season, great expectations are in the air. I am reminded of the music in the first part of Handel's 'Messiah,' and in imagination see the hills by Galilee and a pastoral people at their daily toil; I can almost hear the sheep-bells and pleasant country sounds.

Now, as then, the world is waiting. Harassed humanity expects a Saviour, a mighty Governor, a Prince of Peace.

One name is on every lip: Wilson. When the President of the United States first arrived in Paris, a French lady said - 'He should walk from the station to his house followed by pilgrims from every land.' She meant by this that Mr. Wilson was regarded as a kind of Messiah by thousands of people then in Paris, though not necessarily by herself. Later, when she had seen him pass, she praised his public manner.

It was brave of the President to come, perhaps braver than he knew at first. Paris will do him honour, treat him as though he was the greatest potentate on earth; but he will have to fight for his ideas, and I can't see him carrying more than four or five of his fourteen points.

However, at this festive season, one should not be pessimistic. Besides, I believe that the French lady was thinking of Palm Sunday, although she forgot a certain beast of burden, whereas this is Christmas Day.

*VERSAILLES, JANUARY 15 1919*

The Conference has begun and Paris is a Tower of Babel. Every one talks French or tries to, but there are at least a dozen kinds of French — nasal, guttural, Slavonic, Teutonic, Italian, Levantine, etc. Some of our officers have picked up a few words of 'argot' without fully comprehending all their shades of meaning. The other day, a General, with a wife and family at home, used a phrase which brought a blush so hot to the most carefully enamelled face in Paris, that the top layer of powder volatilized.

The Smarandalanders are back again in the City on the Plain, and my old friend, the Prime Minister, has come here as their senior representative at the Conference.

Smaranda is arriving shortly. It is more than two years since we parted.

*VERSAILLES, MARCH 15 1919*

The fourteen points are being badly mauled. Those that really matter, such as 'open covenants openly arrived at . . .' and 'the freedom of the seas' are dead already. The real difficulty of the moment, however, is Russia. If Lloyd George were master of the situation, he would be sound enough on this point; but there is consternation at home and in America at the bare idea of recognizing Lenin.

Yet while the democracies of Europe and America fume at Russia, they are helpless, and cannot give practi-

cal expression to their spite. In accordance with instructions, my Staff has just worked out how many troops would be required to invade Soviet Russia and establish, presumably, a form of government that would satisfy Conservatives in England and the Republicans in America. The minimum number of men is half a million, and the cost at least two hundred millions sterling. These figures have daunted the most ardent, but I am very much afraid we shall fritter away enormous sums in fomenting civil war.

Life is full of disillusioning experiences, especially in Paris. Hitherto, I have been accustomed to believe that big financiers and captains of industry were strong, silent men who, when they did talk, uttered solid common-sense. I have met several lately, and find that this is not so; for example, one of them stated in my hearing that Germany could pay an indemnity of twenty-four thousand millions sterling. The ordinary army officer has a clearer view of realities than this statement reveals.

One of my few rich friends is a wise old man, and he tells me that making money, once one has got the knack, is as easy as playing checkers. I haven't got the knack, but used to play a game called 'Fox and Geese' upon a draught-board. Francis Bacon makes some comments on this subject, and I must look them up.

My friend the Yorkshireman has got the knack all right. He has just been to see me on his way to London. Thanks partly to my letters of introduction, but mainly to his own qualities of enterprise and quick perception,

S M A R A N D A

he acquired, during his recent trip through Macedonia, a huge quantity of tobacco, and has sold it at a fabulous profit, in America, I believe.

In the course of our conversation he produced two pebbles from his pocket, and lit them with a match. They burned with a smoky flame. He tells me there are thousands of acres in Western Thrace covered with similar pebbles, and that he has got the concession for them. Much will depend on which Government granted him the concession.

Like several other parts of Europe, Western Thrace is a territory in dispute, where self-determination is complicated by the existence of natural resources and potential wealth. The inhabitants are for the most part peasants, who are not sufficiently enlightened to appreciate the value of oil-bearing shale. I should imagine Greece will get this region, M. Venizelos is most persuasive; and in due course the Bulgars and the Turks, who form the majority of the peasant population, will rise up in revolt. I don't quite see how one can stop these transactions, for that is what they are, without admitting that victors and vanquished are alike, so far as justice is concerned, or that, in other words, no one has won the war.

*VERSAILLES, APRIL 13 1919*

Smaranda has arrived, and is looking lovelier than ever. Paris agrees with her; it is her spiritual home, and she loves every inch of it, especially the part around the Cathedral of Notre Dame.

S M A R A N D A

I don't think that by nature I am jealous, and I certainly am not of other men, of whom there are many round Smaranda. This sounds like coxcombry, but in point of fact is not. Smaranda by the grace of God enjoys my conversation; it irritates most people, who silence me with sneers. But she has got the faculty of drawing out the best I have, so we get on famously together, and, when alone, spend many happy hours.

But here in Paris, I sometimes feel like I used to in those expeditions after paving-stones – an accessory and not a fact. Indeed, my predicament is painful: I am jealous of the architecture of this city; my rivals are the Palais Lauzun and to a less degree the Place Vendôme. I remonstrated about the latter, and she replied, referring to the column – ‘Ah! it is such a lonely figure in a crowded spot.’ That’s just how I feel myself sometimes. However, the hobgoblin is, for the moment, less in evidence; I think he has been petrified into a gargoye.

*VERSAILLES, MAY 26 1919*

It is strange how little is known here, although there is so much information. Paris is for the moment the centre of the world, but the Conference is preoccupied exclusively with itself. The gossip is light and entertaining, often illuminating, and for this one is duly grateful. At the Supreme War Council, or what is left of it, we live in a dark wilderness of facts.

Sometimes, when two opposing partisans meet and clash, sparks are emitted, and an intermittent light is shed upon the truth. But no one wants the truth; it is



invariably unpleasant. On the other hand, some of those in the centre of the limelight seem to be getting dazed. They are all clever men, and must realize the appalling gravity of the situation.

I have been much impressed by the Labour and Trade Unions leaders from home. They are moderate and sane, but they face the facts. To those they represent the war has been a tragedy; they cannot regard it as a chapter in a history book of the future, or as an incident which may recur. The working-classes in all countries were informed that this war was to end war; and these representatives of British workmen see with profound disquietude that the pledges entered into, when recruits and munitions were required, are not being kept. Unfortunately, their warnings are unheeded.

The line they take in regard to indemnities seems to me to be absolutely sound; put briefly it is this – ‘Let Germany pay a reasonable sum, sufficient for the reparation of the devastated areas, but do not demand a fancy figure which, if by a miracle it were paid, would ruin British industry and leave us permanently with millions of unemployed.’

As regards Russia, I cannot say whether their attitude is due to far-seeing calculation or merely sentiment. I’m afraid it is principally the latter, but the instinct is curiously correct. I am sure that if Pitt were living now he would endeavour to come to some arrangement with Lenin. The Russian market would attract him. He would perceive that Britain might secure what Germany has lost, and become the workshop for one hundred

and fifty millions of people, whose normal wants have not been satisfied during the war years.

Lloyd George is fully aware of this, but can't persuade the Conservatives who form so large a part of his majority. These latter justify their prejudices against the Soviet Government by pointing to the atrocities committed. Undoubtedly some dreadful things have happened, but they will pale into insignificance when compared to the horrors that will be perpetrated should the old order be restored.

There are some first-rate men in the delegation from the United States. They say that American politics are controlled by the farmers of the Middle West, who do not want Russia to be recognized, as that would, in the end, bring down the price of corn.

What a horrible business it all is, and what a wicked waste! Russia is so important to the British people, not only for what she buys from us, but even more so for what she sells — the raw materials of several industries and food.

*VERSAILLES, JUNE 10 1919*

Life in Paris is very gay, but there is something sinister and tragic in it; at times a shadow falls on the most cheerful gathering. There is a skeleton at every feast; shrieks of shrill laughter die away into mirthless silence. The French, although quick witted and alert, are less sensitive to these impressions than the Anglo-Saxons.

It is a pity that this country does not make more

use of members of its aristocratic families. Some men of first rate ability are being wasted. They spend their time watching and are *sur la branche*; the best of them appear to shun what is called 'Smart Society.'

I often meet a certain Duke, one of whose christian names is Honoré. His comments on the situation are sometimes worthy of a direct descendant of La Rochefoucauld. He used to be the glass of fashion and is now, though just past middle age, a tired, old, immoral moralist.

Last night we dined together in a garden here acquired recently by one of the French 'new rich.' The conversation covered most of Europe and parts of Asia. Our host, a typical French *bourgeois*, talked about docks at Smyrna, railways in Yugo-Slavia, cheap labour in Vienna, the Saar, the Ruhr, and of the fruits of victory to be plucked by enterprising men. Duke Honoré declared that if the Allies set up a Catholic State in Central Europe comprising Austria and Bavaria, they would not only contribute to the security of France by disintegrating the German Empire, but would also establish a much needed buffer between the Italians and Slavs. A heated argument ensued on business and politics, church and state; both the protagonists displayed great knowledge and not a little wit.

Madame our hostess played her part with grace. It is astonishing how women of humble origin adapt themselves to altered circumstances of wealth and ease. She is very handsome, and, according to the gossip of the town, *très honorée*.

*VERSAILLES, JUNE 20 1919*

I am in disfavour, not so much with the big men but with their subordinates who have influence behind the scenes, especially in London. My views on Russia are considered Bolshevist, whatever that may mean on the lips of those who use the term. Moreover, I do not treat the senior officials with sufficient reverence to please them. I expressed a preference for dead lions as compared with live jackals, the other day in a Club in Paris, and this quite innocent remark was taken as a personal affront by an implacable enemy of mine. It is perfectly true that I have never gone out of my way to placate him. He has done well out of this war and has got a multitude of medals; but I don't believe he has heard a shot fired in anger during his military service.

So soon as peace with Germany is signed I shall resign my commission. Five wars and this Peace Conference have proved to me the futility of continuing in my old profession.

*BRITTANY, JULY 25 1919*

I am a free man, enjoying two months leave on full pay before retirement. When I announced my intention to retire, a British Field-Marshal urged me not to; he said there were still many opportunities in a military career. They are not the sort of opportunities I want, however, and I told him that I had decided to go in for politics. His disapproval then became more marked, and he quoted the well-known tag about politics being

a dirty game. I related to him the story of the poet who was found in the train from Brighton on his way to London. On being asked why he went from Brighton's breezes to London's smoke and fog his answer was — 'to get a breath of pure air.'

I explained to this distinguished soldier that my purpose in leaving the Army for politics was not dissimilar. If politics lead to as much jealousy and intrigue as I have witnessed during the past three years, I shall be surprised. Human nature is of course much the same wherever men compete with one another, but the publicity inseparable from politics prevents the worst abuses.

I did not tell the Field-Marshal which Party I was going to join; he would have had a fit. But I am pretty sure he too will be in politics before he is much older. I like this charming, brilliant Irishman, he has always been good to me. The Conservatives will make a fuss of him, but he, though with them, will never quite be of them. I wonder if, and when, and where, we two will meet again.

Smaranda is here also with a small party of mutual friends. We are all writing books. If we read our effusions to each other, what a test of friendship! Like King John, the hobgoblin may die of surfeit.

This is a lovely spot on the coast; hortensias make the garden gay and grow wild upon the cliffs. The hotel is primitive but clean and cheap; there is just, and only just, sufficient plumbing to show what civilization has accomplished since man's first fall.

From my window I see many miles of coast. Imperceptibly the tide creeps in until the waves break on the rocks immediately below. Hitherto, the weather has been fine and Æolus in gentle mood. The waters lap without commotion; their impact makes a pleasant murmur, and this is followed by the rustle of their backwash, a cooling sound as of a widespread effervescence.

I hope there will be a storm before we leave. A westerly gale upon this coast must furnish a tremendous spectacle. I think it was Renan who remarked that, in all Christian lands, the nearer one approached the sea the more numerous were the churches, because the people were afraid.

Renan's country house is near this place. A few days ago Smaranda and I were out with an old fisherman; she asked him if he had ever met the author of the *Vie de Jésus*, and he replied in the affirmative. When pressed for further details, he said that Renan was a very good man and better than any priest. This shocked Smaranda, but she persevered and asked the reason. The answer was — 'Because he often gave me money; and anyone from whom I get ten sous is the Good God to me.' The hint was pretty obvious, and we took it. So it may be that Smaranda, Renan and myself compose a trinity. But I doubt it; the chances are that this old heretic catches more simpletons than fish, and makes more money out of Renan dead than when he was alive.

On leaving here, some of our party are going to pay a visit to another great French writer — Anatole France.

# S M A R A N D A

Next month I must return to England and begin a new life. It will be pretty dull at first, but we have all had quite enough excitement to last us for a time. I am prepared to forgo 'the fellowship, the converse and the wine, the song, the festal glow,' in return for a moral satisfaction I have never yet experienced. Pleasure has been defined as the exercise of the faculties; I have had what is commonly called a good time, and mean now to test my higher nerve centres. After all, an ascetic is a voluptuary whose indulgence is austere and takes the form of self-denial. But if vices are other people's habits this vice is rare.

Smaranda approves. She hoped at one time that I would be a successful General, one of the heroes of the war. It must have required an effort on her part to remain loyal to a failure.

## COMPILER'S NOTE

*For the two years following the date of the last entry Y-'s diary makes tedious reading; it is as dull as was his life. He spent most of his time nursing a constituency for which he was the prospective Labour Candidate at the next election. To reveal the change in his way of living a few concluding extracts are submitted.*

## AN ENGLISH PROVINCIAL TOWN. AUGUST 5 1921

During the last week I have written two articles and made five speeches, all indifferent. At one of the meetings I was variously described as a Bolshevik, a Militarist and an Irish rebel, all of which shows how hard

it is to make one's meaning clear. As I was leaving, a big docker came up to me with his wife, a diminutive person with a most determined face. Said the docker – 'Guv'nor, I believe you're one of them bloomin' pacifists.' I assured him I had reached a time of life when to be called a blooming anything was quite a compliment. Moreover, I had just been called a militarist. The wife was not to be put off easily, however, and she kept me for about ten minutes. This couple illustrates the triumph of mind over matter, of the puny over the burly, of the petticoat over hob-nailed boots. The lady has promised to canvass for me, and my agent is delighted; he says she is a power in her district and I can well believe it.

This agent is an Irishman with a past, who has been both a salesman and in the insurance business. His powers of persuasion are extraordinary; I often compare him in my own mind to M. Venizelos. He tells me that he once sold a hundredweight of chocolate to a fishmonger. I selected him on that.

There is a Messianic side to the Labour Movement which makes a strong appeal. Some of the men and women working in it are the salt of the earth, a tonic and an inspiration to less fervent souls. They are not so sectarian as is commonly supposed, nor half so ignorant of the world as many much cleverer people with impenetrable minds. Of course there are humbugs in our ranks, but so there are in every party, and certainly more cant is preached in the name of patriotism than on the prospects of Utopia.



A political label is not infrequently a libel and as annoying. The question – ‘What do you call yourself?’ is more often put than ‘What do you propose to do?’ My military title makes some electors think that I must be a militarist; others regard me as a brand plucked from the burning and a sort of General Booth. I understand so well the feelings of the mothers about another war; they are the genuine pacifists and the people I want to help.

Canvassing is a horrible occupation, not to say humiliating; one has to do it, because ‘elections are won on the doorstep.’ My agent and I called at a house the other day and were greeted with – ‘So it’s you, is it; I thought I knew your face.’ As the lady was a stranger, I felt intensely flattered at this first welcome proof of my celebrity, and began to explain my views. She cut me short by saying that it was not *my* face she knew, but R-’s, and he had fled. Apparently they had met before, in his insurance days.

My lodgings are in a side street. The landlady is a kind old body and a staunch Conservative, like most landladies. She and her daughter look after the three lodgers – an ornithologist, who makes two pounds a week by writing nature notes for a local paper, a disabled ex-soldier and myself. We have great arguments on politics, a subject on which the ornithologist is somewhat cynical. He says democracy cannot function with an uneducated electorate, and that when the voters become intelligent they will be ungovernable, and there will be anarchy. He paints a lurid picture of

an epoch when twenty million voters will read and understand the works of Mr. Bernard Shaw.

Very occasionally I go away for the week-end; some friends of mine live in this neighbourhood. After one of these excursions I found old Mrs. D —, the landlady, unpacking my suit-case. Or, to be more exact, she was examining a pair of silk pyjamas, a relic of past extravagance and the days when I ran up accounts in Jermyn Street. 'How nice they are,' she said, and added, 'I never knew that people wore such lovely things in bed.' I confess that for a moment my mind wandered far from this street. Returning, I made the lame remark that they were very old. This only increased her admiration, and stroking them with reverent hands, she observed that old silk was the best, they didn't make as good stuff in these degenerate days. It is evident that Mrs. D — was not as they say 'in service' in her youth. Perhaps her daughter is a better judge of artificial silk. If she, the daughter, marries the ex-soldier — she prefers him to the ornithologist — I am sure she will rather have some stockings than a more useful wedding gift.

*A VICARAGE, OCTOBER 5 1921*

A High Church parson, whose vicarage is in the same street as my former lodgings, invited me a week ago to take his curate's flat. He is a bachelor, so I accepted, and am installed in roomy quarters at the top of the house. We get on well, because the lives we lead are very similar, and our characters so different. In the mornings we write — sermons in his case, speeches and

articles in mine. In the afternoons we walk or bicycle, he round his parish, I round the constituency. In the evenings we both go to meetings of some sort; his object being to save the people's souls, and mine to get their votes. Why he should get the *Morning Post* for a penny when I would pay tuppence if I bought it I can't imagine. In revenge I make him read the *Daily Herald*.

Not for one moment have I regretted my entry into politics, nor do I find this pursuit 'a dirty game.' The people of this country are pure gold encrusted with a lot of dross. Such experience and abilities as I may have are at their service for the remainder of my life. Whether they send me up to Westminster or not, I have learnt and am learning far more from them than they from me.

A Parliamentary Election is the consultation of an oracle as mysterious and vague as that of Delphi. The Athenians, for all their wit, lent ready ears to words that were incomprehensible. The Romans, though serious-minded men, discussed at length and with the utmost gravity the utterances of the Sibyl in the sacred wood, not with a view to criticizing, but to discover what she had meant by what she had just said. And so it is in our own times. The oracles don't commit themselves; no prudent politician has a programme.

There are some advantages in entering public life as late as I have; not the least is that one has said in private a lot of idiotic things which, otherwise, would probably have been said in public and noted by opponents. It

must be most cramping to one's style to feel that former utterances can be raked up; but the old stagers do not seem to mind. Politics are like golf: those who begin young get a handicap which those who join in middle age are spared.

One of my favourite distractions is a country walk with the ornithologist, a melancholy man, but a passionate admirer of the poetry of Keats; a poet himself, though very minor, and, what attracts me most, a great authority on the ways of birds.

Returning late this afternoon through a wood, we heard an owl cry. The note was such as one might hear any time after dark; but somehow it recalled a scene -- Smaranda and myself dismounting in the stable yard of her castle in the mountains. Then that same cry came from the forest and filled me with foreboding.

It is late, and the Padre must be back by now. I will go down and take with him my supper of bread and milk.

I wish I hadn't squandered in the past large sums on supper-parties. They would almost have paid the expenses of my election. These slops are very comforting and make one sleep. But I doubt if I shall sleep to-night; my brain is riotous with memories.

There was a letter from Smaranda by this morning's post, from Paris. She is there to consult a specialist about her health; but says there is nothing seriously wrong and that she is always glad of an excuse to visit Paris.

Some one is coming up the stairs; it may be our old

housekeeper, she fusses if we do not take our slops while they are hot. No, it's the Padre, I can recognize his step. What a good chap he is to bother.

He has called out to say there is a reply-paid telegram for me downstairs, probably an invitation to speak somewhere. I shall go if I can, it's all good practice. Public speaking grows on me. After each speech, vanity whispers — 'you can do much better,' and so one pants to try again.

I haven't made a good speech yet, but may get one off some day. And then I hope Smaranda will be present.

*PARIS, OCTOBER 7 1921*

I have just returned from the hospital where Smaranda is lying, waiting for the ghastly operation that will be performed to-morrow morning. Now I know the worst. The telegram merely asked me if I could come over to see her before *an* operation, and of course I didn't lose a minute in doing what she wished. But this is a case of life and death. So far as I can gather, the slashing and cutting will be dreadful; it makes me sick to think of her white flesh under the surgeon's knife.

She is frightened, and no wonder. I would give everything to comfort her, to make her feel less alone. But one cannot share oblivion with another, however dear. Her consciousness is so vivid, the surrender to the anæsthetic will be an agony. She knows the danger, that she will pass a portal through which there may be

no return. The eventuality of her death has been prepared for by both notary and priest.

I have been sitting at her bedside all the afternoon; she has sent for no one else except a few members of her family, so this day has been mine. Just before I left she said — ‘You should take this saying as your motto — *rien ne m’atteint et tout me touche* because it suits you.’ I should like to be able to live up to it, and could perhaps if she were living. But if she were to die, I can’t imagine what I should become or what my world would be without her. Our ways have lain far apart during the last two years, but that has made no difference; I have always known that there was some one who would understand, and write the charming, graceful words that inspired and consoled. When I think of what may happen to-morrow, it is as though a curtain dropped between me and the future, a curtain I cannot tear aside. I have often called her the light of my eyes, but have never realized till now how well the words describe what she was and is to me, present or absent. Smaranda dead! The thought is terrible, unbearable; it blinds and stuns. As I walked back this evening, Paris the gay, the brilliant, the flaunting, the city of light, seemed dark.

PARIS, OCTOBER 14, 1921

A week of anxiety, doubt and dread has passed and the worst has not happened. Hope is now justifiable, and indeed, unless some malign factor intervenes, a steady convalescence may be anticipated.

I was admitted for the first time this afternoon to sit with Smaranda, a very special privilege accorded by the nun in charge, who may have seen in me, for all her vows, some one to whom much might be forgiven. This nun is well known, not only to the suffering, but to a large circle who remember that it was she who nursed Clemenceau, when he was wounded, and wrestled with him for the salvation of his soul, urging him to confess in case he died. Waking one morning, he informed her that he had dreamt he stood outside the gates of Paradise, and being mindful of her words had asked for a Curé, hoping by means of confession, however tardy, to relieve his conscience. She was delighted at these tidings, and asked him whether he did not feel better. 'Alas, dear sister,' he replied, 'I could not confess; they hunted all through Paradise and did not find a single priest.'

My visit was all too brief. I said something which made Smaranda want to laugh and was hustled out; laughter and stitches don't go well together. In the small ante-room, where visitors waited, I found the French diplomatist looking white and troubled. He held a writing block on his knees, and was evidently in the throes of composition. I should hate to do this man an injustice, for he is sincerely devoted to Smaranda and, for all I know, he may have been jotting down some haphazard thoughts on Roman art; but I can't help suspecting that he was recording his sensations, noting exactly how he felt and, in the highbrow sense, reacted under the strain of a poignant situation. Every

French boy of the middle class learns how to make a speech, and not the least important form of public discourse is a funeral oration.

Whatever his occupation, he was genuinely grateful when I reassured him as regards Smaranda. We left the hospital together like old friends, and dined, not copiously, but exquisitely, at La Rue's. Nignon himself prepared the dishes, and produced for our delectation a wine so perilously old, that, to a superficial eye, it might have seemed still and even flat. But in its golden depths there lurked a light, a sparkle more ardent and convincing than brightest foam or frothy bubbles, and by these signs and tokens we perceived that the good fairy had escaped corruption. This fairy is a daughter of the sun and earth, the most grateful product of Nature's chemistry. It was a monk who caught her first, and, like the genii of old, he imprisoned her in a bottle. The worthy man has had his imitators, disciples we might even call them; and connoisseurs can still obtain authentic bottles, whence, after the lapse of many years, the fairy gushes forth in liquid poems.

Ennobled and sustained by wine and food, we sat up late discussing many things; in fact, I think our conversation ranged from Persian poetry to politics. We did not talk of women, a rare omission when men are talking freely; thoughts of Smaranda were uppermost in both our minds. The only reference to her was indirect: we were on the subject of the fauna of Smarandaland and I mentioned Pat. The Frenchman agreed that he was no ordinary type of cat, and his hand sought



S M A R A N D A

instinctively those parts of his person whereon Pat had used his claws.

*THE VICARAGE, OCTOBER 28 1921*

Here I am back again among kind friends, most of them humble. There is no place like England. A mist is hanging over this old city, it creeps up from the western sea and enfolds one in a soft, clinging mantle. Men have adventured forth from here to find new continents, but always when they could come back. I am restless by nature, the 'wanderlust' is in my blood, but the more I travel, the more I find in the West Country a blessed peace of mind.

How a man changes in accordance with his environment. If anyone had said to me, three years ago, that I would be content to live as I am living now, I would have said it was impossible. And yet I have not broken with the past completely; some memories remain and cling, envelop me as does this mist, and they are very fragrant. I am, of course, referring to my relations with Smaranda.

On general principles, a poor man should avoid women like Smaranda. Such women, however human they may be, are lovely pictures and need splendid frames. I tried to run away, half-heartedly, but was brought back, a willing victim. And since I have never ruled my life on general principles, I do not regret it.

*Part Two*  
*SEVEN SKETCHES*



Extract from letter sent by Y – to Smaranda enclosing a sketch entitled *Tu-whit, Tu-who*.

‘You once told me to write you a sketch about a forest, and I have written one about an owl. The whole scene is imagined, except the clearing. I came across that three days ago, when I went out to reconnoitre with one of Prince G –’s gamekeepers.

‘Your local owl is a strange beast, more like what the French call an *effraie* than our English variety. I am well aware that no owl of any sort ever uttered a cry even remotely resembling – “Tu-whit, tu-who” – but what is good enough for Shakespeare is good enough for me. . . .’

## TU-WHIT, TU-WHO

IN the month of September, 1916, the armies of Smarandaland invaded Transylvania, whose name in their speech is the Ardéal, and means the Forest Land. An exceptionally hot summer had been followed by fine, cold weather, clear nights, and early morning frosts. Already, in the high-lying wooded regions on both sides of the frontier, autumnal tints were on the leaves: the sober green of conifers blended with shades of brown and yellow on beeches, oaks and elms, while here and there a splash of vivid scarlet marked where wild cherry trees persisted amid more hardy growths.

Seen from Head-Quarters on the plain below and south of the Transylvanian Alps, this wide expanse of woodland looked like a huge, multi-coloured Oriental carpet, through which the bare mountain-tops protruded as through great holes.

On entering the forest, the columns of advancing troops were lost to view; only white dust-clouds, drifting slowly northward, revealed their presence and their rate of progress. So does a forest hide a host, even by day. At night, no longer a gay carpet, it wraps all who pass within its confines in a dark mantle of mystery and fear.

In forest warfare roads are defiles, on which a few determined men can withstand thousands. To turn the flanks of the Austro-Hungarian positions covering the passes, detachments of the invading army, avoiding

beaten tracks, hacked their way through the forest, burned, felled, laid bare, disturbed, penetrated its most secret places, and left behind them desolation. When these preliminary operations had been completed, the tide of war lapped furiously against the Carpathian rampart, swirled up the valleys, eddied round the spurs, and, having gained depth and momentum from behind, swept forward along the whole length of the frontier.

And as before a line of beaters or a prairie fire, a multitude of animals, whose natural instincts took them southward at this season, retreated to the north. Troops of half-wild horses from the foothills, herds of roebuck from the cultivated areas, bears, wolves and lynxes from their summer haunts; all these, in ever-increasing numbers, preceded the invaders.

At first the driven beasts were mute; they were uneasy and bewildered, too fearful to break back. But when the pangs of thirst and hunger assailed this motley vanguard, cries that were just as piteous as human lamentations echoed beneath the canopy of leaves. From far and near the murmur came, now swelling into harsh crescendos, strident and wrathful, now low and sorrowful, plaintively protesting. Intermittently, a tremulous hooting cry was heard among the over-arching branches : 'Tu-whit, tu-who.' Ruskin used to declare that, whatever wise folk might say, he had always found the owl's cry prophetic of mischief to himself. There was, indeed, something ominous and premonitory about these familiar woodland notes; they

seemed to mock the forest's grief and made all nature more disconsolate.

After four days of this unnatural migration, a check occurred; another line of soldiers was encountered, entrenched behind barbed-wire entanglements and facing south. Strange sights were witnessed then: sights in which Flaubert would have revelled, seen in the course of long night marches, under the spell and glamour of the forest, when all the faculties were quickened and mind and body braced by the keen mountain air.

While a few miles still separated the opposing armies, I set out by night, accompanied and guided by a forester, to reconnoitre the enemy's position. Although the moon was full, under the foliage darkness reigned. After much scrambling and rough walking, a diffused light ahead dispelled the gloom; its source was an open space flooded with dazzling moonlight. A brief inspection showed that this was no glade riven by storm and lightning or bare of trees from any natural cause. Before us lay a belt some eighty yards in width cleared recently – the sawn surfaces of the tree-stumps were still white, and the ground was littered with lopped branches and big logs. We had, in fact, reached the Austro-Hungarian position, in front of which this clearing had been made, to provide a field of fire, and sown with every devilish device for its defence.

And yet a scene more still and peaceful can hardly be imagined. On our left was a pool, dark-rimmed but gleaming at its centre, behind which the ground rose

steeply to a fir-topped ridge. The clearing continued eastward, to our right, in a bright, winding, undulating vista, a silver ribbon across a sable shroud. In front, the forest spread upwards to the Carpathian water-shed, here forming a vast natural amphitheatre ringed in by bare grey summits. The Pass wound between the two loftiest of the peaks; they were its guardians, cold, silent sentinels, glittering austere above the never-silent forest, in whose dim twilight men and beasts were gathered for the slaughter.

'Forests have ears and fields have eyes.' Twigs cracked, leaves rustled, sounds of deep breathing were distinctly audible; from the far side of the clearing rose a hum of human voices. The forest teemed with life. Innumerable eyes were fixed on that open space; it might have been an empty stage whereon the players were instantly expected; the curtain had gone up, but still some signal was awaited.

It came from a giant oak on the far side of the clearing - 'Tu-whit, tu-who; tu-whit, tu-who.' A breathless pause ensued, and then a third time - 'Tu-whit, tu-who.' As though it had been a trumpet call, three horses broke cover and trotted out into the open, snorting nervously, their heads held high. They gazed around them foolishly, then stooped to crop the scanty herbage, jostling each other as they moved from tuft to tuft. Emboldened by this example, a pair of roedeer stepped daintily from the shadows towards the pool; before drinking they half turned towards the moon, and in its radiance the eyes of these gentle creatures, at all



times luminous, glowed with protective emerald light. A lynx crawled along an over-hanging bough and looked down on the roedeer. Behind us, a large beast shambled amongst some bushes; the forester whispered that it was a bear and harmless, being full fed and fattened for its winter sleep. A wolf's howl chilled the blood. A prompt assurance was forthcoming; it meant no danger at this season; wolves do not hunt in packs before the winter. The forester attributed that melancholy howl to a she-wolf who had lost her young in the confusion; she was calling, or maybe mourning, for them. After these reassuring explanations there remained only man to fear.

The horses were never still; they were hungry, and found little grass to eat. A hind leg of one of them got entangled somehow, and it plunged violently to free itself. A loud twanging sound was heard; its origin was unmistakable — if there were wires in this wilderness. they were trip wires and connected with land-mines. The thought had scarcely formed itself when a deafening explosion shook the ground; fragments of wood and stone hurtled in all directions; the fumes of a high-explosive poisoned the fragrant air; a pall of smoke and dust caused a sudden darkness, through which were dimly visible three horses in a writhing heap.

On the far side of the clearing all was now stir and bustle; orders were shouted, whistles blown, and the accoutrements of soldiers clattered as they rushed to occupy their posts. In a few seconds the trenches opposite to us bristled with rifle barrels which belched

out spurts of flame. A sleet of bullets swept the forest, piercing and splintering, wounding and killing, destroying without rhyme or reason, and causing fearful havoc among the thirsty animals converging on the pool. The rattle of rifle and machine-gun fire, the heartrending whinnying of the mangled horses, the wild scamper of animals in all directions, transformed the quiet, sylvan scene of a few moments earlier into an inferno. Overhead, the screeching of scared birds swelled the tumult; while from behind us, where by contrast with the moonlit clearing the gloom appeared impenetrable, came sounds no less afflicting — low moans, shrill screams and snarling roars of rage, these latter not without a note of menace, resembling strangely human curses.

Fearful of capture we fled also. For the first few hundred yards our way led through a shambles; the casualties in our motley vanguard had been terrible. Unwittingly, a reconnaissance had been carried out and had discovered that the enemy's position was being held in force. No doubt the staff at General Headquarters will issue a report.

To the forester this night had been an outrage, a calamity, and a desecration. For days he had seen his forest-friends herded and driven against all natural laws; and at the end they had been massacred by soldiers in a state of panic. He began speaking of the hundreds of dumb, wounded creatures wandering about, or lying hidden, helpless and mutilated, until death from starvation would release them; but words failed him, and he

could only mutter maledictions on the men who had brought the war into their midst. Rough fellow as he was, for the forest and its mysteries he had real reverence – the reverence of a priest in Memphis for temples and the tombs of kings.

A few days later, the Pass through the amphitheatre was stormed and taken. Sharp fighting occurred in the neighbourhood of the pool and left the usual traces. When revisited after an interval of several weeks, graves had been dug for the human victims and marked with crosses, but there was still a stench from the carcasses of animals rotting beneath the undergrowth.

Dreadful tales were told of the suffering of the wounded soldiers, some of whom had been attacked by wolves, and even by bears and lynxes. The climax of this tragedy had been reached when the maddened brutes took their revenge.

It was evening when we stood again watching the pool. Silence prevailed throughout the forest, until an owl hooted, perhaps the same owl who had summoned the horses to the empty stage. So far there had been three acts in this drama – a slaughter of beasts, a battle between men, a terrible vengeance off the main scene in the darkness of the woods. Was this the epilogue?

'Tu-whit, tu-who; tu-whit, tu-who' – 'I was a bad, mad world that night,' the tremulous staccato seemed to say. 'Tu-whit, tu-who' – 'And more to come,' this with a chuckle. 'Tu-whit, tu-who; tu-whit, tu-who' – 'Human nature; human nature.' Each time the intona-

tion was a little different. 'Tu-whit, tu-who' – 'I told you so.' This bird of ill omen had become garrulous and insolent; its sneering, taunting screams grated upon the ear. 'Tu-whit . . .' The report of a gun rang out; a bundle of soft tawny feathers crashed to the ground; out of a triple ruff two round eyes stared, glazing in death; no longer contemplatively malignant they had looked their last on mice and men.

'There's a bad spirit in some owls,' remarked the forester, as he reloaded. But one had met the same spirit in some men – the cynics to whom a distraught world is just a spectacle.

A wintry breeze passed sighing through the forest. The clearing looked sinister without its moonlight sheen; along both sides the trees drooped inwards, as though to hide a scene of so much evil, their lower branches stretching out, above the mounds and wooden crosses, like deprecating hands.

Extract from a letter written by Y — to Smaranda accompanying a sketch entitled, *The Keys of Jerusalem*.

*THE MOUNT OF OLIVES, FEBRUARY 24, 1918*

. . . I am still alive and therefore thinking of you. In accordance with your wishes, I have found time to write a sketch about Jerusalem, but have derived more inspiration from the scenery than from my fellow human beings.

'I hope you will never visit this Holy Land. It might make you too religious and disposed to take refuge in a convent. The hobgoblin in sacerdotal robes would be tiresome. At Bethlehem I came across a building that looked like a prison, where a number of ladies of all countries, but mainly French, have buried themselves alive. The only one of them who ever sees a man is the Abbess; she is very old and looks at persons of the male sex through an impervious grating.

'The Patriarch knew your father and sends his blessing. He is a nice old man who has read Renan's works. It wouldn't surprise me to hear that he has also cast an appreciative eye on the writings of Anatole France.

'Nature here is magnificent, and man mainly vile. I hope we shall do as well as the Turks in keeping order among the Christians.

'A truly haunting spot is the Garden of Gethsemane. A garden full of trees . . .'

## THE KEYS OF JERUSALEM



TOWARDS noon the resistance of the Turks collapsed. They fled east and north, and the advanced troops of the British force on the road from Jaffa pressed forward with an eagerness which was noteworthy. It may have been due to expectation. We had come far, and now the goal was close at hand. The Syrian monk at Enab had told us that El Kubreibeh – the valley where war's intrusion seemed an outrage, so peaceful was the aspect of its sycamores and cypresses and the broad sheet of precious water among those barren hills – once had been called Emmaus, and we knew it was only three-score furlongs distant from the city, a Sunday morning's walk.

After crossing the bottom of a deep ravine, the road skirted its southern edge and climbed in zig-zags to a rocky plateau. The word passed round that this was the last stage; yet even when that long ascent had been accomplished, no city could be seen, and already the short winter day was drawing in. At a bend, where the ravine turned north and the road ran in an easterly direction, were two houses; one was in ruins. Beyond them the ground sloped downwards to another valley into which we could not see. To our right, in the south, a storm was brewing; the mountain tops were blotted out by leaden clouds beneath which the landscape

seemed convulsed; and from that seething caldron white mists crept along the hidden valley, while wisps of fleecy vapour bore down on the plateau where we stood like riders of the sky.

One mountain, rising straight ahead, the storm had not yet reached. Two towers rose upon its summit, and we could see a grove of trees, surrounding a church with many domes, in an enclosure on its side.

'How far off is the top of that hill?' asked a General.

'Just over five thousand yards to the left-hand tower,' was the answer.

The hill in question was the Mount of Olives, the enclosure the Garden of Gethsemane, below which the still invisible city lay, not more than one mile off.

'Remember that no one is to go inside the walls. The Bull<sup>1</sup> will be furious if anything of that kind happens.' This last injunction given, the General went back in his car to announce to Head-Quarters and the world that Jerusalem had fallen.

Meanwhile, a small crowd had assembled in and around the ruined house; it consisted of signallers establishing telephonic communication, a German doctor, two Americans, and three Turks. One of the Turks was the Mayor of the Holy City, and he had brought with him the keys as a token of surrender. They were large keys and quite ordinary, except that they were very clean and shone like silver. There were several; no doubt 'the keys of all the creeds' were in that bunch. They had been offered to two private soldiers, who had

<sup>1</sup>Lord Allenby.

refused to have anything to do with them; their duties as cooks were far too pressing and began only when camp was reached. Dalliance on the road for such as these would have been criminal. Others might traffic with key-bearing mayors; their business was to serve hungry, exacting comrades, and shout out, at the earliest moment possible, the glad tidings 'Dinners Up!'

An Artillery Major also had been approached, but with the same result. He was a solicitor in private life, and the effect of artillery training on his legal mind had been to increase its cautiousness. Those keys were not for him, he felt that instinctively. His ambition was a D.S.O.; whereas the keys of Jerusalem were for people who might aspire to a K.C.B. or even higher. But when he thought of the local Press at home, in Yorkshire, of a whole column devoted to his doughty deeds, headed 'A Tyke takes Temple,' with a photograph of himself and three heathen Turks inset (one of the Americans had brought a camera), he was sorely tempted.

The keys were still undisposed of, when the General who had just departed summoned me to the telephone. He wanted further details before sending off a telegram; but on being told of what had transpired since he left, his voice became eager, anxious and imperative.

'The Mayor with the keys? Has he still got them? . . . Keep him till I come; on no account let him go away or give them to anybody else. I will receive them!'

Preparations for the ceremony were made at once:



a few women and children had by this time assembled, bringing flowers; they were collected in a group and a camera was got into position. There may have been a score of spectators altogether; but memory added to their number, and peopled the plateau with a multitude attending a procession of crusaders.

If Robert the Bruce had achieved his heart's desire and been able to fulfil his vow, he might have ridden by this road after lying overnight at Enab. But he would not have lingered by the wayside in his impatience; the keys would have been received by Douglas, the faithful servant of his King. Godfrey of Bouillon – 'a quiet, pious, hard-fighting knight, who was chosen to rule in Jerusalem because he had no dangerous qualities and no obvious defects' – he, too, would have left to Bohemund or Baldwin what to him would have seemed an empty show. But he, of course, was not successful, only the hero of a legend and some songs.

The man who actually received the keys was neither King nor Pilgrim, though a Crusader in his way. His satisfaction was unbounded as he stood, looking every inch a conqueror, by the roadside, with the ruin as a background. Ruins and conquerors go well together.

Click went the camera, and the General smiled approval; at least there was a record of this historical event, with himself the central figure.

In regard to publicity the solicitor and the General had much in common; but naturally the latter's outlook on affairs was wider. No local Press for him; he aimed at the front page of a Sunday illustrated paper – some

weekly compendium of sport, vulgarity, follies, crimes and lies, with an occasional contribution from a Cabinet Minister. This is an age of doubt; people believe little of what they read, but still retain a touching faith in photographs. His niche in fame's lime-lit temple would be assured if a million Sunday readers knew his face. The episode had been most opportune. With any luck, the negative would be in London by Christmas week, a time at which the thoughts of Sunday readers would turn towards Jerusalem.

Four photographs had in fact been taken; this was the last. The first was of two British Tommies, in shorts, conferring with a Turkish Mayor and two City Councillors, accepting cigarettes and flowers, smiling their gratitude for these gifts. The second was of their backs, as they plodded stolidly eastwards, keyless and careless, while three disconsolate City Fathers stared after them, baffled and charmed by their simplicity. The third showed the Artillery Major on his horse; and looking up at him, appealingly, a frail old Turk holding a bunch of keys. The horseman's face was twitching under the stress of inner conflict between caution and desire. He was neither buying nor selling, but, metaphorically, was looking a gift horse in the mouth. A strange position for a Yorkshireman.

'*Chateau qui parle; femme qui écoute.*' The proverb is incomplete. In all probability, if he, who had neither spoken nor listened to Jerusalem's first Magistrate, had looked at those keys a moment longer he would have yielded. But caution triumphed. Nevertheless,

the solicitor waited until the General's car arrived, and was included in the fourth and final photograph, as a spectator, standing apart, looking as though he mused on life and fleeting opportunities. A Major, of course, should always give way to a General; but he was only one-third Major, and the other two-thirds were his real self in time of peace. To suffer in silence may be a military virtue, and as such its own reward; yet on account of it, he, a Yorkshireman and a solicitor, had missed a short cut to fame. And if, after all, he did not get his D.S.O.!! This big, strong man turned livid at the thought.

A few minutes later the order to advance was given. Neither pomp nor circumstance attended our arrival; we were not entering the walled city, only surrounding it, and marched through squalid streets from a corner near the Jaffa Gate to the main road leading to Damascus. As we passed through the western suburb the storm broke; an icy wind swept up the valley of the Kedron, rain fell in torrents and drenched the tired troops.

Realities are always disappointing; they issue from a gate of horn, not from the ivory gate of dreams.

We had imagined something very different. In the camp west of Beersheba, life had been strenuous and inevitably ascetic; the soul had been swept and garnished, the vision cleared. Waiting while summer mellowed into autumn, marking the changes of the moon, searching for water in a sandy waste, we had

learned the desert's loneliness, tasted the tang of its hot breath, marched through cool, splendid Eastern nights over its trackless surface, watched the sun rise and dissipate the cloudy shimmer of its robe of dew. To some those weeks had been a vigil, the fitting preparation for a high adventure. Even the callous had moments of exaltation, mystical imaginings, mirages of the mind.

In our visions we saw a City Beautiful, where once a temple with a golden dome had roused the envy of Samaritans and the cupidity of Vespasian's legions; we found drab, melancholy walls hemmed in on the north and west by a hideous modern suburb. We had surveyed with the mind's eye a green hill without a city wall; but Judgment Place, Calvary, and Sepulchre were huddled *within* the walls, and almost beneath one roof. We had pictured the 'Via Dolorosa' as portrayed on stained-glass windows; it proved to be a narrow lane, where ignorance and superstition have been exploited, and speculators in real estate have trafficked in the Stations of the Cross. We had heard of Russian pilgrims paying huge sums to be the first to light their lamps at what was called the 'Sacred Fire'; we were to see the filament with which the trick was worked. We had conceived an atmosphere compact of memories of an imperishable story, and breathing peace; we entered an arena for all the jarring creeds. Being British, we tried to hide our disappointment, became more taciturn than ever, and registered another lost illusion.

S M A R A N D A

There was no need. We still possessed our dreams, and of their stuff could create cities far more fair than any structure built with hands. Those bright, intangible, dissolving cities, how peaceful and serene! – no mud, no smells, no noise, no hustling crowds, no simple soldiers hungering for a meal, no envious schemers, no conquerors taking keys, no walls, no secrets, nothing to conceal. They are not rooted to one spot, but come to us wherever we may be, assuming shapes as various as our moods. We are their architects, masters of all, without, within, kings in the kingdoms of our inner selves, whose revelations come and go.

Extract from a letter sent by Y — to Smaranda from Constantinople:

‘I am sending you herewith four sketches of life and manners in the modern Byzantium. Three of them are mainly invented, but in each there is a substratum of fact. The fourth is just an essay on the city, in which, most certainly, I have not exaggerated the tragedy of its decline.

‘In *Dwellers in Mean Streets* you will recognize a friend. She speaks of you with great affection.

‘The man whose appearance and, to a less extent, whose career suggested “The Lost Leader” you will meet shortly. He is going your way, and although he has made a mess of things in Russia, he is possessed of sufficient taste and judgment not to miss paying you his respects.

‘I thought of the story of the little dancing-girl while C —, who is here at the French Embassy, and myself were sitting in an extremely dull night resort in Pera. He was telling me all the gossip, and we were served with a wine so abominable, and at such a wicked price, that I am determined to found a society for the protection of drinkers of pure wine.’

# CONSTANTINOPLE



'The prospect of beauty, of safety and of wealth, united in a simple spot was sufficient to justify the choice of Constantine.'

GIBBON

AN æsthetic Englishwoman once complained to Abdul Hamid that residence in Constantinople did not satisfy her inner life. The Sultan replied that he had heard it was advisable to boil the water in his capital before drinking it. This juxtaposition of the soulful and the practical occurred a few years before the war, when the city still retained some of its former wealth.

Three years have now passed since the war, and Constantinople has ceased to be a great trading centre, nor is it self-supporting with its hinterland, and it certainly is not a 'simple spot.' The Straits do not 'admit the natural and artificial riches of the North and South,' nor, 'when the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus are shut,' does the city still enjoy, 'within their spacious enclosure, every production which could supply the wants, or gratify the luxury, of its numerous inhabitants.'

The war brought normal commerce to a standstill, and peace has not restored it. After the Armistice of October, 1918, the Turkish capital became a focus of intrigue and a dumping-ground for the victims of counter-revolutionary defeats in Russia. Without a corresponding exodus, during a period of at least two years, there was a constant influx of refugees from all

parts of the Near East. A large proportion of these homeless people were Russians; their plight was desperate: most of them were destitute, and, what was more serious, incapable of productive work. The aristocrats sold their furs and jewels; the peasant soldier loafed about the streets; the sutlers became hawkers and plied other dubious trades. The women and children for the most part lived on charity, and many died in misery and want, in spite of the efforts made to help them by various societies and the American Red Cross.

At last, a Russian Army had occupied Constantinople, not as a conquering host come to fulfil the Tsar Peter's will, but as a starving rabble, a sign and token of the old régime in its death throes. Proud Western Slavs had been accustomed to bully and despise the Turks, who were now the spectators of their ruin and their unwilling hosts. At the same time, in Moscow, a new Russia had come into existence, cut off by a line of barrier States from Europe, but open to the south and east.

In a social sense, the effects of the Allied occupation on Constantinople have been deplorable. Pera has become a squalid Monte Carlo; Stamboul has lost its dignity and charm. The city where Asia and Europe meet has had its full share of misgovernment; but the years following on the war have been marked by more moral and material decadence than any Sultan's reign.

At the beginning of this period, a great fleet of warships entered the Bosphorus and has remained there



off the entrance to the Golden Horn. Judging by previous experience, it should have solved the problem. In the days of Abdul Hamid, the arrival of a British squadron in Besika Bay was sufficient to bring that astute potentate into line with the policy of Downing Street. Then, a mere gesture of this description was sufficient, since it showed that British patience was exhausted and that the bluff was called. But since the World War, an Armada can pass the Dardanelles and hold Constantinople at its mercy, without effect—it cannot prevent the Turkish forces routing the Greeks in Asia Minor. These ironclads are just as futile as the idlers in the streets of Pera. They can destroy, but to what end? Constantinople has ceased to be the Capital of the Ottoman Empire. The virile elements in Turkey have cut themselves off from their religious centre, and have left at the *Sublime Porte* a phantom Government, in leading strings, controlled by Allied High Commissioners.

Mustapha Kemal Pasha has found in Angora a seat of government better suited to the aims of Turkish Nationalists. Here, he and his Government mean to work out their own salvation, free from the threat of Allied fleets and the domination of the West.

This small, insanitary, uncomfortable city has few amenities: it is difficult of access; tourists and business men must be content with poor hotels; diplomatists in their hours of ease have few distractions. Some real advantages are claimed for these conditions; people will only go to Angora on business, and business which is

definite and urgent; they put it through without delay and waste no time on social functions or gossip and intrigue. It is as though Whitehall had been transferred to some small town in the Welsh mountains, or perhaps to Gretna Green.

While Angora remains the seat of government, it will be a symbol of suspicion and a hotbed of anti-British propaganda. Turkish nationalism has been aroused and is being organized. The forces at the disposal of the Angora Government are not yet formidable, but they may easily become so. German instructors and French war material will not be lacking in the future, as in the past.

There is another factor in the situation which cannot be over looked – the relations between Angora and Moscow are cordial, and have become so largely on account of British policy since the war. Soviet Russia will not soon forget four white invasions financed with British gold. The Turkish nationalists remember Smyrna.

In pre-war days, Tsarist Russia loomed like a shadow on the northern frontiers of the Ottoman Empire; the Governments of successive Tsars had their eyes fixed on the Black Sea and its outlet. But since the war, Soviet Russia, Europe's pariah, has sought friendship and understanding with the Turks. To both the British Empire offers a broad target, and both have got old scores to settle. After Amritsar, Russian agents found fuel in abundance with which to feed the flames of fear and hate. Throughout Turkey, 'True Believers,' who

till then had never heard Karl Marx's name, proclaimed his doctrines as a gospel of revenge.

Time may have healed to some extent these wounds, but not completely, and dangerous developments are now in progress. The Slavs themselves are half Asiatic, and well equipped to take advantage of discontent in Asia. They will do so while British Governments persist in treating them as outcasts. Panslavism is far from dead; though checked and thwarted in the West, already it is active in the East. A few hundred thousand communists have not changed the Russian character; there are still ambitious, patriotic Slavs who have neither fled their country nor abandoned dreams of conquest. The East attracts them now; Moscow looks eastward, just as, in the past, Petrograd looked towards the south and west. Angora, with the help of Moscow, will try to prove that the East can exist without the West. That task is easier than its converse – the West, or at any rate the British Empire, cannot exist without the East.

It is no easy matter to devise a British policy to cope with this grave situation. Most certainly, a policy inspired by prejudice will be suicidal; it will encounter fierce and widespread resistance operating insidiously in all parts of the Empire. Our great position in the world has been established and maintained by means of sea-power; but, with the development of new methods of locomotion, the importance of sea-communications has diminished. As a consequence, our hold on India will become increasingly precarious, if we incur the hostility

of the peoples on the land-routes, and in a few years on the air-routes, across Arabia to the Persian Gulf. Those peoples are influenced by the Slavs and Turks. We need the good-will and co-operation of both these races, and to that end our policy should be directed.

How to secure good-will has always been a problem: it is not gained by weakness, and cannot be won by force. On the other hand, a conciliatory attitude is not incompatible with firmness and self-respect. At present, the Turks regard us as the protectors of their natural enemies, the Greeks. The Government in Moscow judges us by the utterances of certain violent politicians, not to mention our policy in the past. Yet both Turks and Slavs have more to gain by co-operation with the British than by antagonism, and they know it. We can help them to restart the commerce that once made prosperous Black Sea ports. The raw materials are there for exportation, and the demand for our manufactured goods has never been more keen. But, for lack of confidence and good-will, trade is paralysed. Odessa, Trebizond and Batoum are not doing a quarter of their pre-war business. And Constantinople, once described by Gibbon as 'The Mistress of the East,' is dying slowly of inanition. There is no sadder sight in all the world.

Since the day when Constantine, under divine direction, traced the boundaries of New Rome, many have been the changes in this once simple spot. Romans and Greeks have ruled in turn within its walls. Bulgars have marched up to its gates, exacted ransom, and

retreated, bewildered, awestruck by the distant view of palaces and shrines. By its 'sweet waters,' the Crusaders of the Fourth Crusade forgot their vows to God and King and Pope and parish priest; they lingered here for sixty years, and never reached the banks of Jordan. Lastly, the Turks, who in the course of five eventful centuries have transformed into an Oriental city the former capital of the Roman Empire.

The prospects of safety and of wealth allure no longer. Safety is nowhere to be found against attack by air, to which the Bosphorus and Dardanelles oppose no obstacle. Like a sordid tide, wealth ebbs and flows; it has ebbed at the Golden Horn, and years must pass before it will flow again.

The prospect of beauty still remains. The Marmara, an inland sea studded with the dim shapes of islands; the Bosphorus, a mighty river swirling past palaces and wooded slopes; Stamboul, a line of stately mosques along the crest of a low promontory; all these are visions of sheer enchantment when bathed in the soft radiance of the light of the Levant. A light as wayward as the English spring; it hides itself for days, and, in its absence, even Stamboul looks drab. When it returns, the transformation is swift and magical. Domes loom more vast above the housetops, and minarets take on new grace; the dingy wharves of Galata glow, and the gloom vanishes from Pera's unlovely streets.

At sunset, a mantle of gorgeous colour covers the western sky; each window in Scutari becomes a fiery beacon, and flashes Asia's good-night message across

S M A R A N D A

the Straits. Slowly the islands and the Asiatic shore fade out of view; Stamboul seems to float on shadows; the mosques, gleaming as though carved in opal, tower above a void.

So falls the night on this distracted city, bringing no peace, but sharing with the day the haunting glamour of the East.

# DWELLERS IN MEAN STREETS



'Why were they proud? Again we ask aloud,  
Why in the name of Glory were they proud?'

KIATS

THE Grande Rue de Pera is the principal shopping centre for the European inhabitants of Constantinople. In the late autumn of 1920, thousands of Russian refugees were added to the population of this already overcrowded city. Having neither occupation nor proper homes, these new arrivals sought out the busiest street, and spent most of their waking hours on its side-walks, drifting aimlessly to and fro like scum upon an eddy in a backwater. The men, who outnumbered the women, were for the most part soldiers, and, at first sight, had something menacing in their aspect. These big, strong fellows gazed at the wares exposed in the shop windows with covetous eyes; obviously, their appetites were keen and their purses empty, and in this cosmopolitan Vanity Fair they had the air of wolves prowling around a sheepfold.

Under the circumstances, it was perhaps fortunate that seven years of war and revolution had numbed their faculties and killed the spirit of adventure; that they had drained the cup of hard experience to the dregs, and needed rest and food before they could again be dangerous. The majority were in the flower of their youth, yet

they looked old; their eyes were as lustreless and furtive as those of overdriven oxen; their faces were drawn and haggard. The few women with them were not always Russian women, nor were they always wives.

Narrow lanes lead from the Grande Rue de Pera, on one side, to the Bosphorus, and on the other, to a maze of side streets. In the latter, while the main thoroughfare is flooded with bright sunlight, only a strip of sky is seen between high house-tops. The atmosphere is close and fetid; comparative silence reigns. To these mean streets, at the end of each wasted day, the drones returned to find the honey bees. And here, huddled together in squalid tenements, these exiles talked of Russia far into the night.

Every class of society was represented, from princes with historic names to illiterate peasants. But social distinctions were guarded jealously; like herded with like; a common misery had not broken down the barriers between the aristocrats of Petrograd and Moscow and Russians of the baser sort.

One night, I was invited to a select gathering of scions of the old nobility. The reception was held on the fourth floor of a house in a narrow and typical mean street. Servants who had followed their employers into exile ushered the guests into a room of small dimensions, whose furniture consisted of a bed, two sofas, a plain table, and two chairs. When every one had arrived the company numbered fifteen persons, so the men sat at the ladies' feet on the bare floor. The latter were dressed simply, in striking and, to one who knew them



then, in touching contrast with the elegance of bygone days. The officers looked magnificent in tight tunics with high stiff collars: they were content to suffer to be so beautiful, for the heat was stifling.

To a Tsarist officer, uniform is what plumage is to some male birds: without it, he is lost indeed. Until all hope has gone, he is first and foremost a military Adonis to whom campaigns are interludes in a perpetual mating season. Wherever he may be, in peace or war, in any climate or at any season, regardless of time, place or custom, he arrays himself in all the panoply of his rank, plasters his chest with decorations, and sallies forth girt with a ponderous sword. And he is good to look upon, a fine figure of a man. His vanity is seldom tiresome; it is unconsciously superb. He is both brave and chivalrous, often melancholy, well educated as a rule and imitative; many speak several languages with fluency but write them badly. Like all Russians, the officer is prone to extravagance and display, and is at heart a wild man. The type is disappearing fast; it needs a feudal Russia as a background. Outside Russia, a few thousand picturesque survivors will inevitably degenerate; in Russia, some of them might revert to their ancestral type, which at any rate was virile, and for which there still is room.

Our hostess, though on terms of closest intimacy with her compatriots, was very different from them. Beside her, the other high-born ladies seemed mere dolls, the men lost their jaunty self-assurance and became deferential. Throughout the evening, a courtly

ceremony was observed, which, in surroundings so incongruous, suggested the celebration of some half-forgotten rite.

In the hour of tribulation, austerity consoles. These exiles, the timid, the frivolous and irresolute of either sex, were at last facing the realities of life; and being without resources in themselves, they found an indefinable comfort in this humble room. It had become to them a rallying point, a refuge, and a kind of temple where they acquired fortitude. And the pale lady clothed in black, who received them there, was as it were their high-priestess.

She was no 'Lady of Sighs,' bemoaning helplessly her fate and indulging in bitter recriminations. Much had been given to her, and from her much had been taken away. She had basked in the noontide brilliance of an Imperial Court, had seen its twilight and shared in its extinction. That was the past. There must have been moments when she dared not contemplate the future, when only an almost fierce maternal instinct enabled her to face the present. But of doubt and despondency she gave no outward sign. She worked ten hours a day to keep a roof above her head and educate her children; at night, she received her weaker brethren, and set them an example of courage in adversity and dignity in despair. A high-priestess indeed! Never before, amid the splendour of her palaces in town and country, can she have been so great.

As was usual at such gatherings, the conversation turned on reminiscences. Social happenings in pre-

revolution days were discussed with vivacity; X's divorce, Y's elopement and Z's disgrace provided abundant materials for gossip. These people might have been the inmates of a twentieth-century Noah's Ark with Pera as an Ararat. Their chronology overlooked the war and stopped short at the revolution.

An old Prince made some reference to the future; he had heard of a new project for the invasion of Soviet Russia. When pressed to give details, he revealed an amazing ignorance of the most elementary facts. The others confirmed his story and emphasized his errors. Their imaginations were extraordinarily vivid. From being depressed, they became optimistic, and convinced themselves, if not all their hearers, that this next time the peasant question would be better handled and the invasion would succeed. Our hostess listened while the men elaborated plans; but once she turned, to the only person in the room who was not a Russian aristocrat, with a question in her eyes. Afterwards, she talked to the old Prince in Russian, soothingly, as a mother to a child.

Later, a more tragic note was struck: a young officer produced a revolver with which forty refugees were said to have shot themselves. A silence followed. Women and men alike stared at the weapon; hands were stretched out to touch it; this inanimate object told a story, or rather forty stories, which all of them could understand. At length, some one asked to whom it had belonged. A well-known name was mentioned. 'Ah,' said an officer with a bitter laugh — 'I bet *he* hired it

out and took payment in advance. There are all sorts of ways of making a living nowadays.'

Again there was silence. The revolver still held every eye; it was like a writing on the wall. Then, a swift hand flashed out – a woman's hand, white, supple, delicately veined, instinct with nervous force – plucked the revolver from the table, and flung it through the open window.

A clatter on the cobble-stones broke the tense silence, and some one laughed hysterically. Below the window yawned a black abyss, a fit limbo for accursed things; and looking out and downward into it, her profile framed by the dark sky, stood the high-priestess, a tragic, dominating figure. This temple was no armoury for horror-haunted weapons: she would at least protect the bodies of her flock if she could not save their souls.

Shortly after this episode the party dispersed.

Outside, its trigger smashed, the young officer found his revolver. He examined it ruefully and remarked – 'I shall not be able to shoot Lenin with this,' and then he let it drop.

The Russian soldiers who drifted daily along the Grande Rue de Pera were not unlike that revolver; they too were useless against Lenin; they too had been left upon the streets to rot.

'Satin and rags, so the world wags.' Constantinople has become a focus for evils which are international. When cause and effect are seen in the same street, the imagination and the conscience can be stirred; that is why Pera is worth studying as an object-lesson. Else-

where, however, the same processes are going on, although they are less apparent.

The cast in this human tragedy is everywhere the same: on the one hand, a few ignorant pretentious politicians, a few vampires of financiers, a few generals obsessed by the Napoleonic legend; on the other, millions of weaklings, parasites and snobs, the exploited and apathetic in all lands.

And here and there, by way of compensation, is found a noble spirit, as often as not a woman, a mother, a pale lady with a question in her eyes.

# A PERA NIGHT-CLUB



*'O Terre, sois légère  
Elle a pesé si peu sur toi.'*

INSCRIPTION ON A DANCER'S TOMBSTONE

AMONG the thousands of Russian refugees who flocked into Constantinople, after the second revolution, were three men of very different professions, but who by the accident of fate were brought into close association. One was a banker, another a jockey, and the third an acrobat. The combination was unusual, but so was the situation; and this strange trio was eminently qualified to deal with its lighter side. And there always is a lighter side to life, however tragic may be the circumstances, when human beings are crowded in one spot.

On this occasion, the crowd was mainly Russian, and offered exceptional opportunities to exploiters. It included aristocrats and peasants, artists and members of the professional classes, spendthrifts and misers with their secret hoards. Although the misery was great, money was not lacking, and there were jewels to be sold. Moreover, however marked the social contrasts, these exiles had one bond of union — their love of music, song and dance.

The banker played the part of Crassus in the triumvirate. He could finance an enterprise, with his own or other people's money, and that was the first and

S M A R A N D A

where, however, the same processes are going on, although they are less apparent.

The cast in this human tragedy is everywhere the same: on the one hand, a few ignorant pretentious politicians, a few vampires of financiers, a few generals obsessed by the Napoleonic legend; on the other, millions of weaklings, parasites and snobs, the exploited and apathetic in all lands.

And here and there, by way of compensation, is found a noble spirit, as often as not a woman, a mother, a pale lady with a question in her eyes.

# A PERA NIGHT-CLUB



*'O Terre, soit légère  
Elle a pesé si peu sur toi.'*

INSCRIPTION ON A DANCER'S TOMBSTONE

AMONG the thousands of Russian refugees who flocked into Constantinople, after the second revolution, were three men of very different professions, but who by the accident of fate were brought into close association. One was a banker, another a jockey, and the third an acrobat. The combination was unusual, but so was the situation; and this strange trio was eminently qualified to deal with its lighter side. And there always is a lighter side to life, however tragic may be the circumstances, when human beings are crowded in one spot.

On this occasion, the crowd was mainly Russian, and offered exceptional opportunities to exploiters. It included aristocrats and peasants, artists and members of the professional classes, spendthrifts and misers with their secret hoards. Although the misery was great, money was not lacking, and there were jewels to be sold. Moreover, however marked the social contrasts, these exiles had one bond of union — their love of music, song and dance.

The banker played the part of Crassus in the triumvirate. He could finance an enterprise, with his own or other people's money, and that was the first and



principal consideration. Bacon has observed that when a man's stock is such — 'that he can expect the prime of markets . . . and be partner in the industries of younger men, he cannot but increase mainly.' The banker applied this aphorism, instinctively, to an affair outside the normal round of his activities, and looked for suitable associates. An ample choice was immediately available: Princes, Professors and Generals, by the dozen, would gladly have joined him in any undertaking, however dubious, so great and pressing was their need. But he preferred professionals to titled amateurs. His object was to fleece that woolly sheep the public; and he chose two men accustomed to its caprices, who had gained their livelihood by risking life and limb before gaping audiences and racecourse crowds.

Ever since the Armistice of 1918 Constantinople had been thronged with naval and military officers, diplomats and tourists, and other visitors from the victorious belligerent States. These, together with a few comparatively wealthy Russian refugees, were eager for distraction and prepared to pay for it; but the existing theatres and *Cafés Ghantants* were not sufficiently exotic to satisfy their wants.

Now Pera, though once a cemetery for Christians, had ceased long since to be a resting-place. Even before the war, it welcomed living pleasure-seekers without inquiry into their religious tenets, and aimed at being up to date. Unfortunately, the war had hindered Pera's progress; and, to its shame, this quarter, which proudly styled itself the European quarter, lacked that essential

feature in the apparatus of a modern city – a night-club.

Here was the banker's opportunity. A demand existed; the market was near its prime; conquerors spend their money freely, and hundreds were flocking into Pera. The Allied occupation was like a sea 'in respect of the perpetual importation' of busy and idle people wanting to be amused.

In due course, an establishment was opened which brought Pera up to the latest standards of Vanity Fair. It reflected the prevailing local colour: the cloak-room attendant, at the end of a long dark passage, wore Russian uniform; the waitresses were said to be members of the Russian aristocracy, and wore national costumes; a spectacle and a concert were provided by Russian artists, who danced and fiddled as only Russians can.

It was, indeed, a special sort of night-club. The visitors did not dance themselves; they watched professional dancers, and ate and drank and chattered to the strains of a string band. They thought, no doubt, that they were being initiated into the mysteries of the Near-eastern under-world. In point of fact, although war and revolution, and above all human folly, had made such an assemblage possible in the former capital of the Eastern world, this night-club had no more of the spirit of the Orient than a similar place of entertainment in London or New York.

Nevertheless, it proved a huge success. Night after night a cosmopolitan crowd filled both the supper-room

and gallery. Men and women from all parts of Europe and America jostled with Armenians, Levantines, and Turks. Race and class distinctions were submerged in a new social order, whose most honoured members were drinkers of champagne. These latter paid dearly for their night-club glory in headaches and in cash, but they were nothing daunted — revellers, like poets, make fame a monster, with many eyes and many voices and many pricked-up ears.

The legend that the waitresses were ladies of title, though a source of embarrassment to some, was undoubtedly a 'draw.' Male visitors, who prided themselves on their good manners, made a point of rising and bowing ceremoniously when served, and subsequent digestion was promoted by an exchange of nods and smiles. To judge by the attentions paid to them, the prettiest attendants were princesses; others less favoured might have been countesses or baronesses; while one elderly, neglected dame can only have been a commoner engaged to do the work.

Occasionally, the clatter of the restaurant was interrupted and the babel of voices ceased. This happened when a short, fat man walked round the room, playing a violin. He played as gipsies play that instrument: posturing, grimacing, gazing ecstatically at everything except his fingers, improvising to suit his own mood and fancy, at times using his bow as though it were a saw and the violin a plank, but never failing to produce an exact and perfect pitch for the shrillest or softest note. He extracted from each hackneyed tune its inner

melody, and made real music which is never stale, and sometimes heard when least expected.

An early belief of the Aryan races ascribed a divine origin to music. This may have been because with them music was instinctive. It is so still in many parts of Central and Eastern Europe. A traveller off the beaten track, in Russia or among the Carpathian foothills, may often chance upon a ragged violinist who has caught the echoes of the Syrens' Song.

Another lull invariably occurred when K —, a girl refugee from the Dancing School in Moscow, threaded her way between the tables to the centre of the room. She walked with an undulating motion; each movement of her feet passed rhythmically through her slim legs, to body, hands, and head. The bust and arms were those of a young girl, and though built slenderly, her back was straight and level with invisible shoulder-blades. I have never seen a human form of more exquisite natural grace.

A look of sadness, with a hint of fear, clouded her face except when she was dancing; then a grave smile lit up the child-like features, expressive of some inner ecstasy which no one else could share. But whether in repose or dancing, aloofness and detachment marked her aspect, and were so manifestly unassumed that she seemed more than foreign to those around her, and might well have been a creature from another world.

One of her dances was a *tour de force*, a mazy, intricate gyration, whose speed increased until she seemed

no longer earth-bound, but to be battling in her proper clement, borne up by floating wings of gauze and whirling, outstretched arms. When the frenzy passed, she swayed her body gently like a hovering bird, seeming reluctant to return to earth completely; slower and slower moved the flying feet, the pointed toes traced patterns on the floor, as though she still grudged broader contact; and then, at last, the knees relaxed, and she sank down amid her draperies. As from a trance, one woke to find that something ethereal had materialized.

Each time she fluttered down, with drooping head, a sense of tragedy overcame the artificial merriment of the night-club. The most callous spectators must have felt uneasy. Was she a captive? Had she been ensnared, and if so, by what devilish trick? Did she taste freedom only while she danced? At rest, her fetters were resumed, she crouched alone, a frightened, panting thing, with wide grey eyes that gazed imploringly, asking for respite, indifferent to applause, and piteous in their mute appeal.

In Russia, dancing is more than a pastime: it is an art to which professional dancers are dedicated from their childhood. Like all arts, it is exacting; and chastity of life among the *danseuses* is the rule. To a girl brought up in the cloistral seclusion of the Dancing School in Moscow, this night-club must have been a terrifying revelation, and her own part in it a hateful ordeal. There, as the night wore on, the heat became oppressive, drink fuddled some while it excited others,

smug decorum laid aside its mask of virtue, vice was no more dissembled, sensualists leered lasciviously, and swarthy men, with mottled cheeks and beady blood-shot eyes, shed the veneer which they assumed with European clothes. Then would be heard the cry – ‘*Qu’elle danse toute nue*’; and blanched with terror K – would flee back to the garret she called home.

My latest news from Pera is that the night-club is still prospering. The banker’s stock has ‘increased mainly’; the jockey does not need to ride in races, he keeps horses of his own; the acrobat has done with tightropes, prosperity has made his shoulders sag and increased the circumference of his waist; the short, fat man still commands silence with his music; but K – has disappeared. One morning, when the first summer heat had come, she was found lifeless in her bed.

Anatole France has described certain women as ‘The Thought of God.’ He says that they are sent into this world to console humanity for the suffering incurred through man’s first fall; that they live with us and weep with us for awhile; and then, their redeeming task accomplished, find peace in paradise regained.

Thus K – in Pera. She danced in where prim complacent virtue could not or would not enter; and who can say her presence there was vain? Some tainted lives may be the better for the glimpses of youth and innocence, of art and loveliness, which her brief sojourn gave.

S M A R A N D A

Byzantine earth holds many famous tombs; it will lie softly on all that was mortal of the dancer. Somewhere among the Judas trees K – was laid to rest. I like to think her death was the release of some bright Spirit of the Air.

# A LOST LEADER



VALENTINE: A man I am, cross'd with adversity;  
My riches are these poor habiliments.'

TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA

OF the four serious invasions of Soviet Russia, the one that most nearly achieved success was under the leadership of a man who was not a professional soldier. He had been a civil engineer before the war, and had built railways in Siberia. If the war had lasted long enough, he might have become the Commander of an army; his promotion had been rapid, and, by 1917, he had risen from the rank of Major to the command of a division of Cossacks. In every grade, his personality and military talents had marked him out as a real leader of men. Unfortunately for himself, for he was ambitious, and also for Russia, where good Generals were all too scarce, he only attained the highest rank after the Revolution, when regular operations on the Eastern Front had ceased, and the nation was a prey to civil war.

The 'White Army,' of which he was the leader, invaded Southern Russia, and for a time high hopes were entertained that it would capture Moscow. But gradually the advance lost its momentum, slowed down, then ceased, and degenerated into a swaying struggle on a wide front. The population was not friendly to invaders who, though themselves Russians, sacked farms and drove off flocks and herds. Then followed



the inevitable retreat: a sullen army straggled back across the lands it had laid waste, and sullen peasants watched it pass with curses on their lips. To them all armies were the same. Russia's wide spaces had once more triumphed; another host had swept them like a wave, had burnt and butchered, pillaged and destroyed, and like a wave had ebbed.

A halt was made in the far south on a position of great natural strength. But though weeks passed without the enemy attacking, the defences were not made as impregnable as they might have been, and after a period of desultory fighting were abandoned. The troops were embarked on ships and, together with thousands of civilian refugees, conveyed to Constantinople. Here, the army was dispersed; some units were sent to Gallipoli and Tchataldja, while others were accommodated in an old Allied camp at Lemnos.

For a few weeks after its arrival this scattered host remained in being; its Head-quarters were established in the city and comprised a numerous staff. Something was expected from it, and more especially from its leader, who soon became a familiar figure in the crowded streets.

In appearance he was tall and thin, and he usually wore a Cossack uniform. Thus attired, he looked a typical Russian chieftain. His face recalled vaguely that of President Wilson; it was younger and more masculine, but the contour was the same. At times, when the full, restless eyes were fixed and he held a

hand outstretched, this man presented a curious resemblance to Epstein's statue of the Risen Christ.

To strangers he appeared reserved and haughty. Failure, if he admitted it at all, had not humbled him, but rather had been taken to confer the right to admonish and to warn. His expression was sad, but more reproachful than regretful. The French described him as an *Illuminé*; Orientals made way for his gaunt form respectfully, often not knowing who he was.

His soldiers had always followed him with blind devotion, not only in the hour of victory, but also when cold and hunger thinned their ranks during the marches in retreat. And even when they were parted from him, he remained their leader, and something more than that. Already, among the exiles in the camps, a legend was forming round his personality: He was so merciless and terrible to foes who balked and friends who would not follow. No bullet struck him down while others fell; he remained vigorous amid disease, and knew no fleshly wants. Of such stuff semi-gods were made. Russia was torn and stricken, needed a Saviour, and God had sent this man.

Russian history is largely based on legends, fanciful, vivid chronicles, constantly repeated and embellished, passed on by word of mouth, which illustrate what this race conceived, and still conceives, to be heroic. And the illiterate peasant soldiers saw in this ruthless, domineering chief a hero and a leader whom they feared but needed. Although implacable, he was just, and understood their wants. He and they were one; and

though he had left them for a time, like the heroes of their legends, some day he would come back.

Thus the simple soldiers. In the city their leader was confronted by very different men. He was at the head of a Government, but a Government in name only, accorded rights in strict proportion to its power to assert them, and every day that power grew less. The financial resources at his disposal were soon exhausted, and he was reduced to dependence on the bounty of the French. Large sums of Russian money were being spent, in *Constantinople and other European cities*, on Russian embassies and legations having no connection with the Government in Moscow; but little or nothing could be spared for him to spend upon his army.

There was a mystery about these funds; rumour exaggerated their amount and speculated on their origin. People talked of Koltchak's treasure, saved from the Bolsheviks during his retreat; but whence it came or whose it was they neither knew nor cared. One fact was certain — that treasure had long since been swallowed up in the vortex of Vladivostock. The Black Sea fleet of merchant vessels laden with Russian grain and wine was of great value, but it had been surrendered to the French, who held it against the value of the rations issued to the camps. Lastly, there were the dollars from America. Many millions had been loaned to Kerenski's short-lived Government, and the loan could not be recalled. But those wonderful, almighty dollars were held at the disposal of another Russian

Government outside Russia, whose members lived in Paris. This Government enjoyed a sort of recognition, and was supposed to be preparing another invasion of Soviet Russia. Who was to lead it, and which of the Western Powers would support it? These were the questions of the hour.

Although no one had fought the Bolsheviks with more intense, relentless passion, and in spite of his well-earned military reputation, it soon became evident that the leader of the last invasion would not be selected. The plotters in Paris may have found him too straightforward, too scrupulous, and too independent, not always ready to fall in with their plans. They may have dreaded his ambition, for he was ambitious, though neither ignorant nor vainglorious. The most probable explanation is that he was high-minded as well as high-handed, and therefore an undesirable and uncomfortable subordinate.

As regards the Western Powers, neither Great Britain nor France was in the mood for another Russian adventure. The British Government had decided to cease financing civil war in Russia; and French enthusiasm had cooled.

When this change of attitude was revealed to him, the man in Constantinople realized that he was lost. As the months passed his helplessness increased. His sword was rusting in its scabbard; something had snapped within him, his spirit slackened like the cord of an unbent bow. The greedy adventurers who had fawned on him, while his star was rising, deserted; he

watched them go with bitter satisfaction; they had always reminded him of jackals. Of his soldiers he thought incessantly: their trust and admiration were now based on a delusion; and yet he could not bring himself to undeceive them, tell them that everything had changed, that he was not a man of destiny, but just like them, a forlorn, forsaken exile without the power to save. He cheated himself into believing that he was necessary to these humble folk, and that rather than be abandoned, they preferred to be deceived.

He had made himself the foremost champion of what he regarded as a sacred cause. But causes intoxicate their champions, they stir the imagination and confuse the judgment, and make men dream great dreams. What his dreams had been can only be conjectured. Perhaps, like other Generals, he will write his memoirs. If candid and written in the style of his more intimate conversations, they should be a curious human document, and shed a lurid light on some transactions which have been wrapped in mystery since the war. For example, the passage, explaining why he left Russia and brought his troops to Constantinople, might run as follows: -

‘My position was impregnable, and it may well be argued that the retention of this foothold on Russian soil would have facilitated the success of future operations. When I evacuated it I said that the administrative services of my Army were disorganized, that the men were dispirited and needed rest out of the reach of

Bolshevik contagion. Of course I knew that this was nonsense. All armies get dispirited and need a rest, and in Russia the administrative services are invariably disorganized. As for the Bolshevik contagion, I had always held the conviction that only a deluded fool could accept such pernicious doctrines. My men were not fools but good Russian soldiers, who took their political views from me and officers of my class. To fear such contact would be to admit that right and reason were on the other side; to base one's strategy upon it would be madness. No, as I have often stated, I was not driven out of Russia, nor in any way compelled to leave. I left of my own free-will.

'I had been encouraged to believe, by the French Government and certain British politicians, that I was Europe's chosen instrument for the overthrow of Bolshevism. When they offered me Constantinople as a refuge, I was surely justified in assuming that it was intended as a base for my unconquered and unconquerable army. The Allied garrison was weak, less than a third of the Russian forces at my disposal, and these, moreover, were devoted to me personally and homogeneous; whereas the British and French Commanders were divided by the dissensions and intrigues of their respective Governments. The city itself was a bone of contention; its occupation cost a lot of money to the victorious States; all of them wanted to be rid of it, but did not dare to leave their allies there alone. I imagined that they wanted me to cut the knot. After all, this outlet to the Mediterranean had been promised as part

of the spoils of victory to the Government of the murdered Tsar, whom I represented.

'It seemed to me an astounding turn of fortune's wheel that I, the only Tsarist General of note still in the field, should be invited to occupy Constantinople with a large Russian army. I thought of the last Testament of Tsar Peter, and it occurred to me that this would be the way to bring about a restoration of the old order. Every Russian had heard about that testament, and knew that on its fulfilment depended Russia's future glory. All classes and all creeds would in the end have been united in such an enterprise: Bolshevism would have vanished like an evil dream; the Slavs would have become masters of the East, and no European Power would have been able to impose a limit to our expansion.

'The Imperial Throne was vacant, and the surviving Romanoffs far from popular. I was prepared to lead the Russian people as I had led my men. Now it all sounds fantastic; but at the time, European statesmanship was in abeyance, and a resolute man at the head of 50,000 troops could have remade the map of the Near-eastern World. Dynasties have been founded in the past on claims far less substantial; soldiers have found crowns lying in the gutter, and picked them up, and put them on their heads.

'Unfortunately for me, a change took place between the date when I decided to leave Russia and my arrival in Constantinople. That cursed Labour Party in Great Britain, with its Council of Action, frightened my

bombastic friends in the British Government, and they yielded to an artificial clamour in order to keep themselves in office. In Paris, Bakmetieff was all powerful; the American dollars were in his keeping; he hated me because I had always distrusted and despised Kerenski's talking gang.

'I dropped the substance in grasping at a shadow, the shadow of a great adventure. If I had stayed in Russia, I would still have been some one. Already I had done something — it was my *offensive* that saved Poland. Given time and a little money, I could have saved Russia also. I played for big stakes and I lost. I was a fool to trust either the refugee aristocrats or the Governments of the Western Powers. As Napoleon said — "*Le peuple seul a des entrailles.*" Now that it is too late, I see that the greatest mistake I ever made, and I have made many, was when I left Russian soil.'

President Wilson may often have had somewhat similar regrets in Paris. Indeed, there are not a few points of resemblance between the careers of these two men. Both had succeeded by their innate superiority of spirit and the exercise of masterful, imperious wills. Both thought they could crown their work and set the seal upon their fame by a masterstroke in the arena of international affairs. Both were betrayed by opportunists and deserted by so-called friends. Both were solitary minded, and to the character of each there was an unlovely, jealous side. Yet both of them suffered most through seeing others suffer, and in neither was patriot-



ism ever dimmed by personal or selfish interests. Both, though in very different ways, were reformers, who tried to follow their ideas to a logical conclusion. And so, inevitably and in self-defence, the mediocre mass conspired against them and brought about their downfall.

During the brief interval of life vouchsafed after his fall, the ex-President could find some consolation in social intercourse and intellectual pursuits. Not so the thwarted man of action. He has survived the ruin of his plans and leads an obscure existence, without power for good or evil – he to whom power was the breath of life. Russia has lost a civil engineer and given the world a roving, restless General; added one more to the sad company which haunts the capitals of Europe like restless shadows of a bygone age. And of them all, his is perhaps the most pathetic figure, for all his martial bearing and the proud poise of his head.

Remorse afflicts most keenly the proud and honest, and must be gnawing at his vitals. Perhaps, as time goes on, regret for failure to achieve will be replaced by nobler feelings, more worthy of the man. The host he led is scattered far and wide; yet still a faithful remnant is awaiting an order from its absent chief. Unlike the parasites who fawned during his glittering hour, they trust him still; surely, he will not leave them to their fate.

These wanderers have suffered much; their patience and ignorance have been enough exploited. Russia's vast spaces need these men; on alien soil their energies are wasted, their minds and bodies rot. They must be

pinning in their squalid camps for spacious windy steppes, and sighing in southern cities for Russia's summer nights — nights that are pale, not dark, and charged with a mysterious melancholy. When twilight comes a misty shadow rises along the eastern sky, creeps up with slow, reluctant steps, pauses awhile, then, from below, receives the new day's light and melts into the dawn.

If the lost leader still dreams dreams, he can achieve a greater fame than that of any conqueror or king — by keeping faith with trustful men, who want him back to lead them home. And so he will fulfil his legend.

A legend of violence and terror, of pity and remorse; the story of a sinner not a saint. During long winter nights it will be told at peasants' firesides, by men convinced that they had seen the apparition with their own eyes, when homeward bound across the steppe at dusk. They will relate how from the south there came the thunder of approaching hoofs, and through the gloom a host emerged, a host of horsemen, cracking their whips and uttering wild cries as they stooped in pursuit. Riding in front, a man with pale, set face and fierce, relentless mien; him they had recognized as the famous leader, who, when the revolution came, had swept across the land, like an avenging spirit, towards Moscow and the north. And every trembling listener will kindle at the mention of that leader's name. The youths will sit entranced, and learning that those who followed were their forbears, and that the progeny of those phantom horses grazed on their fields and whinnied in their barns, will in imagination see the leader,

S M A R A N D A

feel his presence, and know that if he called them, they in their turn would follow also, blindly and to the end.

And then some woman may take up the tale, and tell how down the village street at dawn there passed a solitary man, with haunted eyes and outstretched hand, his tall, emaciated form wrapt close in cerements, as though just risen from the tomb.

She also had recognized the leader, who came back as a penitent, and died a saint.

Extract from a letter sent by Y – to Smaranda from the Monastery of Rilo, enclosing a sketch entitled, *Wizards, Diplomats and Pigs*.

‘The sketch enclosed is based on what I have seen and heard during the past fortnight.

‘I am staying in this monastery for a few days’ rest, and there is no better resting-place in all the world.

‘Although parts of the monastery buildings date from the ninth century, the structure itself has no particular architectural interest. It consists of a quadrangular block enclosing a paved courtyard, near the centre of which stands a blue-domed chapel. At one time, two tiers of semicircular arches rose on three sides of the quadrangle, but the symmetry of the original design has been marred by the interpolation of intermediate arches, and the crude colouring of the columns (they are whitewashed) offends the eye in daytime. By moonlight, however, Rilo has a solemn beauty difficult to describe.

‘If Rilo were all of grey stone, like the oldest of its towers, it would look what it was – a stronghold in the wilderness surrounded by church lands, where monks combined the care of souls with forestry and agriculture. Some of the old Abbots must have been great fellows; their functions included the administration of a vast estate, the conduct of political negotiations and the rôle of intermediary between several warring races. In fact, they had to be, at one and the same time, astute business men, statesmen and soldier-priests.

'Rilo is still worth visiting because of its position. It lies amid woods near the head of a sheltered valley; and down this valley runs the Rila River, singing a song of waters from the heights, sliding past sedges, bubbling over boulders, filling the air with pleasant sighs like the rustling of a thousand poplars.

'All manner of men have been to Rilo to find sanctuary and peace of mind – Sultans and Kings, statesmen and outlaws, merchants, adventurers, the proud, the humble, the impenitent and the contrite. Some have come by the valley road, escaping from the world below; others have descended from the mountains, seeking refuge from the inclemency of nature and the wild animals that still roam the forests.

'An old Irishman is buried here, James Bouchier, formerly correspondent of *The Times* in the Balkans. He had worked hard for Bulgaria, though without success; and when he died, 20,000 peasants followed his funeral cortège from Sofia to Rilo. His tomb is outside the monastery walls, facing down the valley. The last scene must have been impressive – the burial service at the graveside, night, the glare of torches on the sky, shadows beneath the trees, the rushing waters, and all around a mourning multitude.

'King Boris gave me a great description of it, and said he hoped that when his own time came, he would have won such love and gratitude from his people, and have a burial as sublime.

'On those who have the "wanderlust" some places

S M A R A N D A

exercise a powerful attraction, and on myself none more so than *Rilo among the hills*.

'But alas! A light railway is creeping up the valley, the stream is being bridled and polluted, saw-mills screech out the death-knell of the forest. So, come quickly, if you would see Rilo before its peace and beauty are destroyed.'

# WIZARDS, DIPLOMATISTS, AND PIGS



THE man of the moment in a certain Balkan State was convalescing in his native village after the Conference of Peace. A peasant by birth, bred in the open air, he had wilted in the atmosphere of Paris. After signing a treaty under duress, he had visited some British cities, seen the industrial machine at work, placed a few orders in the name of his impoverished country, and returned home hurt, in body as in mind. Those who professed to know said that this tribune of the people, a fiery orator and a fervent Socialist, had learned a lot as the result of Western travel; had, so to speak, put water with his wine. And others wondered; they had sat with him in the long, low-ceilinged room where he received in semi-darkness, and had found the traveller, if not reticent, quite disconcertingly unimpressed.

Two souvenirs of the English visit had come back with him — a signed photograph of the then Prime Minister of Great Britain and a Berkshire sow. No better selection could have been made: it covered the whole range of curiosity and local interests. The photograph was studied by aspiring politicians eager to learn how wars were won. Pig-fanciers, that is to say the whole male population from fifty miles around,

flocked to the village to see a British female pig with fourteen piglets in perpetual motion.

Soon after his return, the convalescent statesman was visited by the Minister of France. The latter left disgruntled. He confided to a colleague afterwards that conversation on general topics, such as the Peace Treaties and concessions to financial groups, had not aroused the least enthusiasm or even interest; and that after he had tactfully alluded to the subject of the photograph, when he rose to go, for the first time the great man displayed some animation, and urged him on no account to leave the village without having seen the pigs.

In the back-yard, where the sty was, the usual crowd of talking, gesticulating men was assembled when the Minister arrived. A meeting of the Green International might have been in progress, so many languages were being spoken. But neither frontiers nor indemnities were the subject of discussion; the one absorbing topic was the occupant of the pig-sty and her progeny. Their praises were on every lip; never had unanimity been so complete at any international gathering. To the French diplomat it was gall and wormwood to see and hear so much enthusiasm for anything that was not French. The importation of this pig was, he reluctantly admitted, a stroke of genius. Nothing else, no human being, no other animal could make quite the same appeal. All the French laces, soaps, and perfumes had been wasted, and last, but not least, the wine. He determined to send a telegram to Paris reporting



this latest form of 'Perfide Albion's' pernicious propaganda.

Then there was the photograph; it also had a curious fascination, due no doubt to the smile of the man portrayed. French celebrities had not got that subtle smile: Carpentier's was too obvious, Foch's too fierce, Clemenceau's a grin, Poincaré's very sad. He ransacked his memory for smiles which might be suitable, and recalled that of a Calvinian pastor in the ancient town of Nîmes. He decided to mention this also in his telegram; and, meditating gloomily, went off to visit a monastery in the neighbourhood before returning to the capital.

Among the Prime Minister's visitors that same morning were the British Chargé d'Affaires and a young secretary from the American Legation.

'Queer fellow, that,' observed the Englishman as they drove away together. 'How bitter he is against the Opposition parties!'

'I guess he's got some cause to be,' replied the American. 'After all, he's a peasant, and in these countries the peasants always pay. They can be got at. The traders here are carrying on their business under French or Italian names, in order to avoid taxation.'

'That may be so; but we've got to look after the older men with property and some stake in the country. These agrarians are nothing more nor less than Bolsheviks in disguise.' He paused a moment, to let the familiar word sink in, and continued, 'It was a good idea sending out that Berkshire sow.'

'The best ever,' responded the young *Transatlantique* as the French Minister called him.

After a pause the Englishman continued:

'He didn't say much about his interview with our Prime Minister, though the photograph is in a prominent position. They should have hit it off all right; both are men of the people. By the by, there was a publicity agent in the village, who wanted to advertise that side of the English visit.'

A faint smile passed across the face of the American. 'So I gathered,' he said. 'I met that agent, and he seemed upset that there should be a crowd round the pig-sty and the photograph upstairs not being looked at. He wanted it hung on the wall of the yard so that the plain people from the countryside, who came to see the pig, might also become familiar with the features of a great peacemaker. That's how he put it to me. The suggestion was turned down, however, and pretty roughly too. A proposal to plant the sow and her offspring in their owner's bedroom couldn't have been received more coldly.' And then, somewhat irrelevantly, he added, 'You know these peasants are very superstitious.'

Towards high noon, the Hegumen or Abbot of the monastery, a noted preacher, called on the peasant Premier. He told a tale of suffering and want in humble homes, of cattle requisitioned in the upland valleys, of families weeping at the railway stations while their bullocks, without which they could not earn a livelihood, were crowded into trucks and sent away to pay

indemnities. He asked for justice for his flock, and warned the harassed statesman that there were limits to the patience of the poor, among whom he noticed a growing spirit of revolt.

A husky voice replied at length – ‘Father, I did my best at the Peace Conference; but, in Paris, revenge obliterated reason, the fountains of justice were sealed up, and to invoke mercy for the innocent proved that a cause was bad. Our enemies were implacable and inexorable; it is they who dictated the terms of peace; their influence is still great, even in England, where what they call “big business” is all-powerful. And when they talked of peace and progress . . .’ He glanced at the photograph on his writing-table – it showed a well-fed, prosperous-looking person, whose smile affronted two men in sore straits by its complacent self-assurance.

‘Don’t let the peasants see you with that photograph,’ said the Abbot. ‘They are religious and attend church regularly, or at any rate their wives do. Already there are rumours that you have been bewitched by a smiling wizard. Go to the monastery chapel, or come and hear me preach next Sunday. There, painted upon the wall, you will see the face and form of Asanoff, a man of our race whose great natural gifts were enlisted in the service of the Devil; and who, eight centuries ago, was known and dreaded as the Deceiver. The picture is allegorical of course, and was included among the sacred paintings by the Fathers of our Church as an example and a warning. It is recorded in the ancient

writings that the weak and foolish were deceived by this man's smile; they believed that he was what he said he was — a chosen instrument.' At this point, the speaker glared at the photograph, and pointing towards it, added — 'That smile is curiously like the facial contortion of Asanoff when engaged in his wicked work.'

Exactly the same discovery had been made by the French Minister, who left the monastery in high good humour, carrying a Kodak camera with which he had taken several snapshots. He was accompanied by the representative of Kerenski's Government, a Russian refugee. Passing the publicity agent in the village, the French diplomat stopped his car and offered him a lift. The invitation was accepted gladly by one who had frequent dealings with the great, but whose social status, strictly speaking, did not entitle him to such an honour. An explanation was soon forthcoming. 'I want,' said his host, 'two photographs reproduced side by side in the local press: one of the British Prime Minister, and the other which I myself have taken. The best newspaper will be, I think, *The Morning*; it has always supported French against British interests. . . . That other rag? No, I don't think so; its circulation is, I admit, enormous, but *The Morning* is read by the clergy.' Then, turning to the Russian he exclaimed — 'What a people, my dear P — skil! How Arcadian and stupid! Not worth the fuss we make about them. In future I shall concentrate on pigs, the Craon breed from Anjou. But what a lucky find! I went to see the tower, not the paintings, they are always crude; and quite by chance

I noticed the one I photographed. The resemblance is really striking, and the effect on these superstitious peasants will be prodigious.'

But the Russian was distracted. The sucking-pigs had reminded him of an English colleague, a famous *gourmet*, and the good old days. As envoy of the Tsar, he had hectored and bullied in the Balkan States, and he was frankly contemptuous of modern diplomatic methods. His enemies had given him the nickname *Brut Impérial*.

★

Calm settled on the sun-baked valley; the babel of village life was hushed in the drowsy silence of the siesta, before day's second birth. If, as the French say, *On vieillit vite au soleil*, it must be because in sunny lands two days are spent in one. And free at last, a weary man lay resting on the divan in his darkened chamber. It was good to rest thus, scenting the meadows and the reek of farmyards, among the simple country folk who were so patient and laborious. He knew them well; he had not forgotten. Soon, when the heat became less fierce, they would begin an afternoon of toil; and he would wait till twilight brought more pleasant tumult, lowing of kine returning to the byre, voices of men and women with their children trooping back from the fields. Later a simple meal, an hour's gossip in the cool night air; and, when the breeze blew freshly from the mountains, re-entering the house he would sit at an open window watching the tavern close, the lights go out, and listen while belated footsteps

echoed along the empty street — some one returning late, perhaps some one waiting for the laggard — and round this fancy he would weave a delicate romance, for he was young and something of a poet; then, with the plot all in a tangle, to bed and sleep under the benison of a summer night.

On the following Sunday the Abbot preached a sermon of great power and beauty in the courtyard of the monastery. An immense congregation came to hear him, for there was much sorrow in the land. Although they had heard it many times before, the peasant women shuddered when he told the story of Asanoff, the deceitful man, depicted on the chapel wall in the act of stabbing in the back the nearest of three anguished victims, for apparently no other reason than that they were in his way. 'Mark that smile,' thundered out the prelate; and the women marked it well.

The men were more interested when he discoursed on flocks and herds, since then at least they understood him. Few men or women understood the Abbot; he had been a soldier in his youth, and strayed, a wanderer, far from the fold. At times his eloquence was very moving; hard, avaricious faces softened and became less distrustful when he described the Perfect Shepherd.

As the most important person in the congregation had half expected, there was a reference to the healing of the Demoniac, whose evil spirit when cast out entered straightway into a herd of swine. The subject required careful handling before an audience so largely composed of pig-owners, who might have special views. The

preacher explained that evil spirits could come only from without, since, thanks to the Church, the State had been delivered from them some centuries before. But if they were good churchmen and vigilant protectors of the body politic against outside interference, there was no danger; neither would they themselves be troubled, nor would their herds rush violently down a steep place like the swine, misnamed the Gadarene, who met that fate upon the eastern shore of the Lake of Galilee.

'A fine sermon; just what was wanted,' chortled the French Minister.

'Those photographs were wonderfully well reproduced in *The Morning*,' observed the publicity agent. 'Free copies have been distributed in the villages.'

'A slump in wizards and a boom in pigs,' was the comment of the young American.

'Italian Minister has ordered a large consignment of Sicilian pigs; says that national honour is involved.' So ran a telegram to the British Foreign Office.

'We shall be having pigs as ambassadors before long,' growled the Russian. Quite naturally he was bitter; his Government could not supply a Russian breed of pigs.

*Part Three*

*A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE*





Extract from a letter sent by Y – to Smaranda after a tour in Western Thrace:

‘I am back again in Rilo, a fit and proper halting-place after my latest expedition.

‘About a month ago I landed at Dedeagatch from a tramp steamer out of Constantinople. The Ægean is a sea whose foam may be, as Gobineau has said – “thick, white, scintillating, flaky,” and from it wise men may have seen arise the apparition of triumphant Aphrodite; but it certainly has on its shores the foulest and most verminous of ports.

‘I stayed at Dedeagatch for one night, because I had to, but left at screech of dawn, next day, for the countryside. On this trip, which was done on horseback, I was accompanied by a most excellent person called George, an Abyssinian, who offered his services as a groom. In point of fact he is everything – cook, valet, interpreter and forager, besides being first-class company. I assumed, not unreasonably, that he was a member of the Coptic Church; but not a bit of it; his religious tendencies are, I should think, Islamitic; at any rate, he holds strong views on the right of every man, who is rich and brave enough, to have several wives. Although not rich, George is very brave. His English is as good and more emphatic than my own for all practical Balkan purposes, and he knows this country as I know St. James’s Park.

‘B – I have lost for journeys of this kind. He has married a French wife.

'To begin with, we followed the Via Egnatia, the old Roman road from the Adriatic to Constantinople. When this road turned north-east, that is to say inland, we continued in a westerly direction, along the coast, and rode through many miles of oak scrub. At night we camped near villages, but never in them, although we always met with courteous treatment and offers of hospitality.

'Eventually we reached a point where the track traversed an isolated mountain mass, a beautifully wooded feature, with numerous springs on its southern slopes running in rivulets to the sea. Here we stayed for a week, and I visited some curious ruins under the guidance of a priest. This is the place I endeavour to describe in my *Tale of Western Thrace*.

'This region reminds me of a mortuary. The inhabitants appear like pygmies against a tremendous background peopled with shadowy, gigantic forms. The past is too much for the present in Western Thrace.

'How strange are the migrations of humanity. For centuries this part of Thrace was populous, a centre of trade and industry, a granary, a highway between east and west. Now it is deserted except for occasional travellers, a few prospectors and the peasants, who grow tobacco instead of wheat.

'But still it is a lovely land, and I hate to think of it being industrialized, as it may be if it is found that the shale deposits yield oil in paying quantities. I have a friend, a Yorkshireman, who has concessions for hundreds of acres covered with pebbles of shale; the peas-

ants burn these pebbles in their fires. Moreover, this Yorkshireman believes that there is copper also. I thought that the Phœnicians had exhausted all the mines.

‘You won’t learn much about concessions, but I hope you will spare an idle hour to read my *Tale of Western Thrace*.

‘To-morrow I go to the source of the Maritza, the Hebrus of the Ancients. Close by, there is a mountain on whose summit a Temple of Jupiter once stood. . . .’

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER I    ∞    THE BACKGROUND



FOR many centuries the region known as Thrace has been a crucible of warring races; it has been invaded by Persians, Romans, Bulgars, Serbs and Turks, while Greeks and Jews have nibbled at its coast line and worked their way up the more fertile valleys. Crusaders have passed along its ancient road, and it has been a highway for spasmodic movements between West and East. During the five centuries just ended, it was the wrist of Turkey's devastating hand in Europe, whose pulse still beats.

But this is comparatively modern history and Thrace is infinitely old. More than a thousand years before the Christian era, there lived in the interior 'a very noble race of savages, who believed in the immortality of men.' Sun gods were worshipped on its mountains, altars piled high with aromatic wood flamed on their heights. From far and near men came to crowd the steps of some secluded sanctuary, and hear the voice of Orpheus, the seer, the thinker, the preacher of pure doctrine, the poet and musician, the High Priest of Apollo and a messenger of light. In its luxuriant valleys have been practised horrid, obscene rites, and human victims have been sacrificed by Priestesses of the Moon. And here

have taken place mad Bacchic orgies, when, by the shuddering glare of torches, wild warriors and frenzied women revelled on midnight hills.

In those days Thrace was young. Now, at night, a shepherd's fire may twinkle faintly, or windows lighted from within may mark some isolated monastery where watch is kept. Even the villages among the foothills seem deserted; and when no moon is up the mountains are wrapped in gloom. The old High gods are gone; the splendour of torchlit revels has been brought down, replaced by garish lights in towns along the coast.

Throughout the ages down to our own days, two types of Thracians have existed: the hill-men, shepherds and peasant farmers who dwell on the upland plains, and the traders whose homes are in the seaports and a few towns among the foothills. These types are everywhere antipathetic, but in Thrace racial distinctions embitter the eternal discord between town and country-side.

The majority of the hill-men are Turks or Bulgars, slow-witted people, industrious, patient up to a point, extremely covetous and suspicious. Living in close touch with nature, they are, in a superstitious way, religious; but whether they be Christians or Mahometans, the god they worship is a pagan deity, a nature-god of fruitfulness and reproduction.

The traders are for the most part Greeks; only a small proportion of Jews and Armenians have survived their competition. They control the ports, are bankers, usurers, middle-men and pedlars. Their god is the god

of gain; and thirst for gain gives them a rare tenacity and courage which master their instinctive dread of the rough hill-men. They have known persecution, but in the last few years have taken their revenge.

And so, especially in Western Thrace, the antique strife persists. It is less religious than vocational, and though, undoubtedly, race plays a part, it is in fact a struggle for supremacy between two social systems, a wasteful, futile struggle, but inevitable.

Although it abounds in vivid contrasts, the scenery of Western Thrace is never gay; more often it is sombre, significant and suggestive. Below the peaks lie wind-swept table-lands, and forests of beech and oak. Valleys, like scars, drop almost vertically to the foot-hills, and broaden suddenly into fertile plains. The mountain streams that near their sources leap in swift cascades, swell into sinuous rivers, form little inland seas below the terraces, and flow on sluggishly through lush meadows between banks of slime. These various topographical features are so close that a traveller, on foot or horseback, can pass in a few hours from the clean air and spacious prospects of the mountains to the reek and squalor of an Ægean port.

On the higher levels the spurs fall steeply and resemble the buttresses of a vast cathedral, until they are merged in wooded slopes. But here and there a salient ridge rises from the tangle, protrudes above and through the foothills, projects across the cultivated areas, reaches the muddy foreshore and juts into the sea. These promontories suggest strange fancies; they

might be huge, prehensile tentacles, thrust out from the central mountain mass to clutch the coastal plain.

The face of nature changes slowly in regions which are sparsely populated. And so, invasions, battles, sieges, slaughters, even the Turkish occupation, have not deprived the Thracian mountains of their glory. They are best viewed on moonlit nights, looming immense, serene, benignant, above the glimmering *Ægean*, mirrored in inland seas, their sides enveloped in black folds below the glittering peaks.

Such is the background of this story, which tells of John, a Thracian farmer, and Salomé, who was his wife.



# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER II THE FARM



WHILE still a boy, John had inherited from his father a farm on the southern slopes of the mountains of Western Thrace. Up to the year 1911 he had lived there with his mother, who, as in duty bound, often urged him to get married; but she was hard to please — no one seemed good enough for John in her maternal eyes. And he himself was in no hurry, though by this time thirty years of age and the last of his line.

A fatality, not uncommon in this part of Europe, had dogged John's family: his father, several uncles and two elder brothers had died young or been killed in feuds. Other members of a once numerous clan had emigrated and been lost sight of, leaving him the sole survivor. Partly on that account, but more because of his mother's unceasing vigilance and hard work, he was a man of substance.

In the early summer of 1911, while on a business visit to a town among the foothills, he met Salomé; and then this quiet, reserved, self-centred man caught fire. That same evening he told his mother he had met the girl he meant to marry, and after explaining who she was, awaited the inevitable reproaches. These came fast enough.

'My son, you must be bewitched. You, the one farmer in this neighbourhood who is not in the clutches of the Greeks, you want to marry the daughter of Papoulos the old bloodsucker, who used to be driven from the village with sticks and stones when men were men. Ah me! To think that it should come to this after all the years of drudgery and saving; that I should see a Greek girl mistress here, a pale-faced cat! What would your father say if he could hear you?'

John's memories of his father were of a silent man at home and a mighty talker in the village tavern; whose pride it was that, although his ancestors for many generations had been Turkish subjects, no alien strain had ever tainted their Bulgarian blood; whose hatred of the Greeks was instinctive, and found expression in sudden fits of rage, when, as was frequently the case, he or his friends had been outwitted. John himself did not share these violent prejudices, or rather, in his sheltered prosperous life, he had not had occasion to think much of them. Still, he was proud of being a Bulgar, and had foreseen and understood his mother's point of view.

Nevertheless, the meetings with Salomé were continued and fanned the flame of his desire.

At this period, Salomé was in her sixteenth year. She had for the first time accompanied her father on his annual trip into the hinterland, and was staying with some relatives at a town in the foothills, while he went farther up the valley. In the coast town, where her home was, she had met many so-called Bulgarian traders,

who were in reality Spanish Jews. But a genuine Bulgar, a peasant farmer and a hill-man, had never crossed her path until this visit. And John did not resemble in the least the ferocious person she had imagined. He was well built, of middle height, with a rather Oriental cast of face, a sallow skin, high cheek-bones, bright, quick-glancing eyes.

As he rode into the courtyard of the house, he had all the air of a descendant of one of those despotic Khans who had led hordes of Tartar horsemen, wild riders out of Asia, across the Danube, from north to south, some thirteen centuries before. He was a masterful sort of man; his peremptory ways with others and his gentleness with herself flattered Salomé's vanity, and she encouraged him. Like most women of her race, she was calculating. But John was no ordinary suitor; and though, in her fastidious Greek eyes, he might appear uncivilized, among the rough hill-men he was a sort of king. At least so she thought, having never met his mother. Her own mother had been dead for years, and she also was an only child.

When Salomé's father returned from the mountains he was at once informed of John's courtship. Spreading out a well-worn map, the Greek trader, with the assistance of his brother-in-law, marked on it the exact position and extent of John's property. After putting a few searching questions as to its management, he said, 'Excellent; this is a very fine estate, and it might be made much more productive. What fools these farmers are!'

'John is no fool,' interposed his sister-in-law, 'he's a fine and decent man.'

'Oh, I know all about John,' replied Papoulos – 'he comes of a family of men who are as bold as brass with everyone except their wives. That will suit you, my Salomé. We'll make you a rich woman if I know anything about that farm. I passed it this morning, and John's mother glared at me as though I'd come to rob her. Lord, what a spitfire she used to be, and I dare say she's got worse.'

In the following autumn, the marriage of John and Salomé was celebrated according to the ritual of the Bulgarian Church. John's mother, having nowhere else to go, remained at the farm; and from the outset there were constant bickerings between the two women.

In the summer of 1912, Salomé's first child was born, a fine healthy boy, and for a time relations were more friendly. The first Balkan War began in October, a war in which Greeks and Bulgars were allies against the Turks. At this time the whole of Thrace was Turkish; but as one result of the victory of the Balkan Allies, Western Thrace became Bulgarian, to the great satisfaction of the elder woman. In 1913, the victors fell out with one another over the division of the spoil, and John went away to fight in the Bulgarian army against the Greeks and Serbs. At home, his wife and mother fought a no less bitter battle, day in, day out, a war of words.

At length the news came that the Bulgars had surren-

dered. John's mother then took to her bed, for the first time in her life reduced to silence. There she lay broken-hearted, dying of injured pride and helpless hatred.

John was still absent when the end came. Philip, the monk who administered the last sacrament, left the death-chamber worn and pale. He had seen many people die, but never one like this fierce old virago, whose last words were imprecations cursing the Greeks and all things Greek.

He found Salomé sitting bareheaded in the garden; near by were her child and an old Greek nurse.

There must have been among Salomé's remote forbears, on her mother's side, some of those red-haired, blue-eyed Thracians whom historians have described. This evening, with the sunlight in her hair, red fire glowed within its dusky depths; it lay in braided coils above her broad, low brow and framed the ivory pallor of her face. Her eyes were as blue as the Ægean, a pale, cold blue, which sometimes deepened into violet.

A hint of defiance was in her manner as she rose to greet the monk. Life had been far from easy during the last two years, and she made no pretence of grief in this her hour of liberation. After Philip's departure, she began at once to prepare the corpse for burial; interment could not be delayed on account of the summer heat.

At a bend on the hill-path leading inland from the farm, Philip paused and looked down on the house he had just quitted. The sun had sunk behind the western

hills, and the valley lay in shadow. His thoughts were of the living rather than of the dead, of Salomé rather than of the woman whose dying curses were still ringing in his ears. The young Greek wife and mother reminded him of an exotic flower transplanted to this Thracian hill-side; and in a sense she was a hostage, even as Helen was in Troy.

Among the hill-folk, resentment against the Greeks had been increased by recent happenings; the rumour ran that Greek soldiers were being disembarked at the coast towns, and in that case, when the men came back, there would be civil war. So thought the Bulgarian women, who one and all regarded Salomé with suspicion. She was so very Greek, tenacious, proud, intelligent, but quite incapable as a housewife. They chuckled as they thought how different life would be for John after his mother's death; for it had been the old woman's unceasing toil that had kept the farm intact. John was so easy-going and took everything for granted; he was the slave of an alien wife who could not or would not work.

Philip knew well the hostility to Salomé; he also knew her husband.

In his opinion, John had never hitherto been really tested. Of course, if there was anything in heredity, he should be a Bulgar of the Bulgars, and might come back a violent anti-Greek. It was not a pleasant thought.

Shivering slightly, although the heat was still oppressive, the monk resumed his upward way.

He was still a young man, not forty years of age,

and reputed learned. His youth had been passed in Vienna, where he attended the University, and was studying for the medical profession when, without warning, he suddenly left the city and was next heard of in a monastery in Bulgaria. Later, he had taken charge of a small hospice, higher up the main road, about two miles from John's farm. Here he had worked among the scattered population, both as priest and doctor, for ten years at the time this story opens. He was loved and respected by the peasants, who called him 'Brother;' the women called him 'Father Philip.'

His appearance was ideally monkish – a black beard enhanced the pallor of his face; heavy dark eyelashes fringed dark eyes, which, though full and gentle, were his worst feature – there was something furtive in their glance.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER III ~ THE VILLAGE OF THE TOMB



JOHN's estate lay along both banks of a mountain stream flowing almost due south. Its eastern boundary was one of the two main roads which join the Ægean seaboard with the Maritza Valley in Bulgaria. On the north and west its limits were undefined, for in these directions it abutted on a mountainous forest region, a no-man's land, or any man's with energy and an axe. To the south it terminated on a bluff, overhanging a straggling hamlet called by the Turks 'the Village of the Tomb.'

Here the ground falls in terraces facing east and south, and the stream traverses a valley-plain, which must have been at one time an arm of the sea. Just below the terraces, a number of sepulchral mounds mark the site of a buried city. The name of the village was not suggested by these mounds, however, but by a tomb of much more recent date.

At the southern extremity of the bluff, there was a cave containing a sarcophagus which had been placed there at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Parts of the Latin inscription on it were still decipherable when Salomé was living at the farm.



It ran as follows:

'Here lie . . . '—the first name had been entirely effaced—'. . . Angela . . . noble Venetian lady . . . battle . . . Bulgars . . . A.D. 1207.'

The date is interesting and historical. At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Boniface, Marquis of Montferrat, the leader of the Fourth Crusade and an ambitious man who had aspired to the Imperial throne, became ruler of Macedonia. With him were many old Crusaders, land-hungry men, who took whatever they could keep by force of arms. One of them went east, along the Via Egnatia, until he reached this valley, and on the bluff he built a castle, and lived therein in feudal state with his Venetian wife.

But not for long. In the year A.D. 1207, the irrepressible Bulgars raised the standard of revolt against the new invaders. A pitched battle ensued, in which Boniface and hundreds of his knights were slain. Among them was the marauder of Western Thrace, whose mortal relics were brought back by faithful followers, and consigned to the tomb he had selected in the plenitude of his power and pride, little thinking that his name would be forgotten and effaced.

Of the Lady Angela little is known, except that she died young and childless. Perhaps she refused to live without her lord, and was buried with him. Who knows? So many Thracian customs are of Eastern origin. The castle fell into ruins; John's farm-house was constructed

with its stones and stood in what had been its garden, the garden where Philip found Salomé, the night John's mother died.

Immediately above the cave an oak tree stood; one of its branches projected above the entrance. The Turkish authorities used this branch for hanging criminals; many a corpse had dangled from it, covered with flies by day, swaying by night to an accompaniment of creaking sounds. These ghastly, pendulous objects were not uncommon sights, but this particular gibbet was obtrusive; it dominated the whole plain, hung like a brooding, horrid presence over the village; and at evening its shadow fell across the garden plot.

In this neighbourhood, the population consisted almost entirely of Turks and Bulgars. Some of the latter were Pomaks, that is to say Bulgarian Mahometans, their ancestors having adopted the religion of the Turks, at the time of the Turkish occupation, to protect their women-kind from licence. For this reason, they claimed that their lineage was purer than that of the Christian Bulgars. Between the Turkish and Bulgarian peasants religious differences were not acute; on the other hand, the hard monotonous vocation which they shared and their common hatred of the Greeks were strong bonds of union.

After the Peace of Bucharest, in 1913, John and other survivors of the war returned to the 'Village of the Tomb.' Although Western Thrace remained Bulgarian, conditions had changed during their absence. Many farms, especially on the lower slopes, had passed into

Greek hands. Fields and terraces where maize and wheat had been grown from time immemorial, were now planted with tobacco. One consequence of this was a shortage of food; for though the crop was profitable to the new proprietors, the wages paid for work on the plantations were insufficient. Slowly but surely the villagers were becoming dependent on importers for the necessities of life. They had lost the art of weaving garments, and the local blacksmiths no longer forged their implements. Most of them were in debt to the traders, who had grown arrogant after the victory of Greece, and were less accommodating in regard to mortgages and loans.

Papoulos, whose visits were now more frequent, was an object of special hatred; but no one now dared to chase him from the village with sticks and stones. Early in the year he had acquired two terraces bordering on John's estate, and had announced his intention of bringing up labourers from the coast to cultivate tobacco on them. The threat of an invasion by armed men would have caused less dismay.

During the winter months great distress prevailed. In February, 1914, storms of unprecedented violence raged in the mountains; the passes were blocked with snow and all communication with Bulgaria and the north was interrupted. The Greek merchants seized their opportunity: prices rose, debts multiplied, men sold a bullock for a week's subsistence to these implacable purveyors, on whose behalf the elements seemed to fight.

Like other upland farmers, John suffered heavy losses in sheep and cattle. Just before Christmas, Salomé had given birth to another boy, but the customary feastings and rejoicings were omitted on this occasion; there was too much misery in the land, and the neighbours were unfriendly and aloof. They had not forgiven John for marrying a Greek, and more particularly the daughter of Papoulos, who personified to them all the worst qualities of a hated race.

Watchful, suspicious eyes followed John everywhere. His losses were considered rightful punishment; his dejection was noted gleefully. These desperate, distracted people wanted him as a leader; he was marked out as such by birth and the extent of his possessions, which were still beyond the reach of scheming Greeks. When he refused to join them in a pogrom, the men denounced him as a traitor; the women declared he was unworthy of his mother and called him coward.

During those winter months, John faced the facts of life. He thought, as he had never thought before, of politics and ways and means, of the future of his country and of his home. In the words of the monk Philip, who saw and heard everything, his 'testing time' had come.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER IV ∞ PAPOULOS THE GREEK

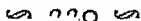


THE spring in Thrace is a brief interlude; it begins and ends in April, a month of riotous, exuberant growth. Scarcely has winter's grip relaxed, before the sun beats down with semi-tropical intensity, and the long Balkan summer has begun. Before May is out the corn is golden, and fruit trees dotted on the fields resemble tents of lustrous green.

At the close of a breathless day in June, Salomé was sitting in her garden with the monk Philip. She had been complaining about the conduct of her neighbours, and he had endeavoured to explain their point of view. Eventually he said – ‘Salomé, you should persuade your father to abandon his schemes in this neighbourhood. The people are in a dangerous mood; they hate and dread Papoulos.’

‘Who hate and dread Papoulos?’ The question came from the Greek himself, who had approached them noiselessly from the direction of the house. He was travel-stained and dusty; his face looked drawn, but the eyes were piercing and bright with unquenchable vitality in their deep sockets.

‘Do these pigs of peasants hate and dread me? Dread



no doubt, they have good reason. But hate! What do they know of hate? The old ones, women like John's mother, the dead or dying, they could hate; but this generation is too soft. Ah! I have got some scores to settle all the same. They used to treat me like a dog, and now I am their master. Down there' – he pointed to the plain – 'we Greeks own everything; and we are creeping inland. No one can stop us.'

'Where have you been to-day, father?' asked Salomé.

'Up in the mountains, looking at beech trees which ought to be cut down, at disused quarries, at roads which need repair, at all the neglect and waste.'

'That is the fault of the Turks,' interposed Philip. 'The Bulgarian Government will surely do more to develop the natural resources of the country. You should remember we are all Bulgarian subjects now.'

'The Bulgars and Turks are all the same,' replied the Greek imperturbably, though he winced at the reminder of his citizenship. 'They have no ideas of progress and not much more intelligence than their bullocks. Look at their farming – they scratch a bit of ground, scatter some seed, and up comes a splendid crop, so bountiful is nature. Then they thank God or Allah, it makes no difference and might just as well be a bull-faced Bacchus, and turn their cattle loose into the fields to thin the crop; after that they do the harvesting. That's how John works his farm; he's no better than the rest.'

'Their methods may be primitive and old-fashioned,

but our peasants are patient and industrious,' urged the monk.

Before Papoulos could reply, John appeared at the gate on horseback. He had been to the town in the foothills, and from the expression on his face had brought back important news. His tidings were indeed momentous – the Archduke Francis Ferdinand had been assassinated that same morning, in Sarajevo, by members of the Servian 'Black-Hand.'

During supper Papoulos was absorbed in thought. He appreciated the full significance of this event, as his business brought him into frequent contact with both Austrians and Serbs. In answer to Philip's anxious inquiries, he said:

'The Austro-Hungarian Government has now found the pretext it wanted, and will overrun Servia, unless Russia comes to the rescue of the Serbs, and that will only be a beginning. It's a high price to pay for the murder of one man and his wife.'

John's eyes sparkled as he said: 'Servia deserves punishment, and perhaps, as a result, Bulgaria will get Macedonia, which is hers by right.'

'You mean by faked statistics of the population,' replied Papoulos.

'By religion,' interrupted the monk. 'Seventy-eight per cent of the people in Macedonia are members of the autocephalous Bulgarian Church, and accept the authority of His Beatitude the Exarch.'

'And we are taxed to pay his salary, we Greek traders. It is so like the Bulgars; they must always have

something special. What do they want with an Exarch? A Patriarch is good enough for most of us.'

'Bulgaria must have Macedonia,' said John. 'I hope King Ferdinand will help the Austrians, they have always been our friends.'

'Small States should never make war with or against Great Powers,' observed his father-in-law sententiously. 'They lose whatever happens. They're like earthen pots which float down a river with pots of brass: sooner or later the two sorts bump each other and the earthen pots get smashed.'

When the monk left, John went with him a little distance. Papoulos remained silent until their footsteps were no longer audible as they climbed the rough hill-path behind the house. Then he called out to Salomé:

'My daughter, I must leave you to-morrow morning. Come, sit with me here on the verandah and listen to what I've got to say.'

There was something in her father's manner which Salomé had never remarked before. She placed a low footstool beside his chair, and seating herself upon it leaned against him. They often sat thus together when alone: the daughter, so cold and reserved with others, all tenderness and solicitude; the father, no longer the hard man of business, with dreamy reminiscent eyes. This evening he stroked her hair fondly and murmured: 'Bless you, my Salomé,' – then for a few moments they sat in silence, watching the night.

The verandah faced south. In front of them lay the garden, a small strip planted with rose trees and wild



lilac. Here the bluff terminated in a cliff some thirty feet in height, and on its brink, a little to their right, rose the dark shape of the oak tree, whose gallows branch projected southwards above what in the gathering gloom seemed an abyss. The village on the terraces below could not be seen from the verandah; only the hum of voices betrayed its presence. A sickle moon hung in the west; trees cast long shadows on the plain, where grey-green meadows and faint yellow cornfields stretched out in misty chequers to the sea.

'Things haven't turned out quite as I expected,' Papoulos said at length. 'Sometimes I think I was wrong to allow you to marry John; though your mother, my first Salomé, would have liked the match. She was not Greek; her family was of a Roumanian origin, as you know. They had lived among the people of the foothills for many generations and had got accustomed to the Bulgars. But you are Greek, as I am, and these people hate you. At first I thought the old feuds would be settled; there was talk of an alliance at the time, an alliance against the Turks. But it was never more than an arrangement between the Governments; the racial hatreds were unsubdued. Bulgar and Greek have fought for thirteen centuries, and so it will be to the end. It is the destiny of the Greeks to fight the barbarians from Asia. We have been bled white in the struggle, scattered throughout the ruins of our Empire, and have become a subject population for the most part. But we are still a nation, and our power and glory will return. We must win, we've got money and intelli-

gence. Why, I who came here a hatless, coatless pedlar, a poor wretch whom they scorned, I had eyes to see and a brain to plot with, and now I am rich, aye rich, far richer than anyone imagines. But I ought not to have let you marry a Bulgar. There was no real need. John's estate tempted me I'll allow; it could be made into a gold mine. The fools round here and that gossiping monk think that I go into the mountains to look at beech trees, or that I am satisfied to grow tobacco. Why, not two miles from this house, up by the disused quarries, there are acres and acres of smooth, black, silky pebbles, which you can light with a match, my Salomé, and which burn with a smoky flame. Do you know what they are? Shale, I tell you, oil-bearing shale. Just think of it! A fortune waiting to be picked up, and almost at your backdoor. But one has got to be so cautious with these Bulgars. If King Ferdinand and his friends get wind of this, they'd pass some law, and neither I, nor you, nor even John, would get a sixpence. So we must wait a little.'

'Wait for what, father?' asked Salomé.

'Perhaps for another war,' replied Papoulos. Hearing John's voice in the farm-yard, the Greek spoke fast and almost in a whisper:— 'Salomé, if it comes to another war, you cannot stay here; neither you nor the children would be safe. Promise me, swear to me that you will obey all my instructions in this matter, and that you will join me on the coast wherever and whenever I tell you to. It may be that I shall be unable to fetch you away myself, but my messenger will make all arrangements.'

Before Salomé could reply, John entered the room behind them, and she rose hurriedly, as though afraid of being found in secret converse with her father. Between the two men relations had never been cordial; they had only one common tie – Salomé and the children; and as regards the future of the latter held very different views.

‘John, I am going back to the coast to-morrow,’ said Papoulos. ‘The assassination of the Archduke will cause a panic and my business needs personal attention; I can’t trust anyone. By the by, you should get some of those beeches felled. Beeches are jealous trees; they kill their neighbours. Yes, yes. I know their leaves enrich the soil; but what do you want with beech-mast? It’s only pig-fodder. Cut ’em down, my boy. I’ll get you a fair price for the timber. And if you plant trees at all, think of posterity and plant pines.’

John always resented the way his father-in-law gave advice; but he nearly always took it, sometimes too late.

‘I thought you were going to do something about the quarries,’ he said. ‘Philip was telling me you believed they might be worked with profit.’

‘That’s true enough,’ said Papoulos. ‘But you don’t own the whole area, and it’s no good trying to work it piecemeal. What you should do is to get possession of the ridge and the open space below it. You’ll have to arrange the matter with the Government through a lawyer. Secure the quarrying rights and then stake out a claim; they won’t refuse it to a Bulgar. I’ll find any

money that may be needed, but don't mention my name in the transaction.'

'You have been very generous already,' said John, softening in his manner. 'Without your help I should have had to sell some land after last winter's losses.'

'Tut, tut; that's nothing. I don't want you to sell your land to anyone outside the family. In these troubled times it's the only thing that doesn't melt away. If there's another war, and mark you it's quite possible, some traders, quite smart ones too, will lose everything, ships, money, stocks and shares. I may myself be beggared; and it will be nice then to have this place of yours to come to as a refuge. You wouldn't refuse me hospitality, would you, John? Aye, war's a dreadful thing for those who are on the losing side. Talking of war, John, you may be called up as a soldier.'

'There's no need to *call* me up; I'll fight for Bulgaria of my own free will,' said John proudly.

'That's all very well, but you might get killed, and Salomé would be left alone with the two children. I have told you all along to make one of your sons a Greek subject. There's nothing like having a foothold in several countries in times like these. All the big Jewish families do it, and like them the Greeks are everywhere. Besides, you never know how a war will go; after the next one, Western Thrace may change hands again.'

'That's impossible,' broke in John hotly. 'Bulgaria was only beaten last time by a combination of all the other Balkan States. This time, Turkey will be with us, and perhaps Roumania. I hope, for Salomé's sake,

we shall not fight against you Greeks. Why should Greece interfere?’

‘Why should Greece interfere! For the same reasons that Bulgaria may side with the Austrians against Servia – because of greed, and fear, and hate and the passion of revenge.’

So malignant was the aspect of Papoulos as he spoke these words, that his son-in-law recoiled. The history of Bulgaria contained many instances of Greek vengeance; every peasant had heard of Basil Bulgarok-tonos<sup>1</sup>, the Slayer of the Bulgars; and John himself had seen, in Macedonia, Bulgarian villages put to fire and sword and fleeing, terror-stricken peasants.

That night the Bulgarian farmer had frightful dreams; again and again he started up in a cold sweat of horror, and when the bewilderment of sleep had passed, he thanked his God it *was* a dream.

A pillar of smoke rose from the bluff with leaping flames beneath; and men were dragging some one to the tree – an old man with a lean squat frame and grizzled beard, a form he knew so well. Dry-lipped and choking, powerless to move his palsied limbs, each time he struggled frantically to shout, but whether a warning or a curse he could not tell when he awoke. Salomé’s father was his country’s foe – Papoulos the terrible Greek.

<sup>1</sup> In the eleventh century the Byzantine Emperor Basil defeated the Bulgars at Belasitzza and put out the eyes of 15,000 Bulgarian prisoners. Seeing these unfortunates on their return home, the Bulgarian Tsar Samuel died of grief.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER V ~ THE QUARRIES



DURING the first year of the World War, comparative peace prevailed in Western Thrace. Local jealousies and disagreements were almost forgotten in common uncertainty and fear. The neutral Balkan States were waiting on events: neither Bulgaria nor Greece dared to intervene while Servia was winning hard-fought victories over her haughty northern neighbour.

Early in 1915, John had acquired the remainder of the ridge lying north-west of his estate. He had been just in time; there were, apparently, other applicants for this concession. But the fact that he was a Bulgar and the owner of the adjacent land had stood him in good stead. Moreover, the only approach to the quarries passed through his property. It was a rough track, at best, and not more than a footpath on the higher levels in the forest.

Papoulos laughed heartily when John related how he had overheard one of the disappointed applicants remark — 'Let the fool get on with his quarrying and make the road.' But John himself did not see the joke; he was, in point of fact, not a little puzzled by his new possessions.

This mountain had always been a place of mystery

to him. With the crest of the ridge he was familiar, his cattle grazed upon its northern slopes; but, to the south, it terminated in an arc of rugged cliffs enclosing a barren waste which the shepherds and peasants never entered, in spite of the shelter it afforded from north winds. They declared that it was haunted, and when asked by what, replied – ‘By voices.’ And in a sense it was so. For the least cry uttered within these confines reverberated, multiplied, swelled in volume, and came back in a babel of protesting echoes. It seemed as though the solitude resented man’s intrusion, or any disturbance of its wonted silence, and that these multitudinous murmurings were angry voices out of the living rock.

Quarries indeed! What race of men had shattered the lofty summits, riven the chasms, scarped the precipices? For whom and for what use? Imagination might supply an answer, people the empty spaces with immortal shapes, Muses, winged messengers, guardian Hours and see in that secluded amphitheatre a council chamber, long since deserted, hewn out by Titans, for the use of Gods.

A wilderness of boulders lies below the cliffs, bordered along its southern edge by forests. Hither Papoulos brought stone-crushers, rails, tubs of iron and retorts. At night, long trains of pack-mules climbed the track with clattering loads. At night, again, they descended to John’s farm, each mule with two small barrels on its back. The barrels were deposited in the ruins of the chapel, whose crypt became an oil store.

‘These are only the beginnings,’ Papoulos would

remark. 'Later we'll make a road and bring up more machinery; but for present purposes the track is quite sufficient. It never does to make things easy for other folk to peep and pry. We can afford to wait. Thrace is a country with a future.'

Thrace, the old and fabulous, with a future? A murky prospect opened out, obscured by smoke, greasy and black with bitumen.

In September, 1915, the Bulgarian army was mobilized and John joined his regiment. With him went all the Bulgars of military age. As the Turks had already been called up, only old men were left with the women and children in 'the Village of the Tomb.' Fortunately, the harvest had been completed before the last contingent left.

Bulgaria's intervention was, to begin with, fatal to the Serbs; but Greece maintained a neutral attitude while the Bulgarian army invaded Northern Macedonia. After this initial success, a period of suspense began for Bulgars and Greeks alike. Even victory had lost its savour for the former; it had been gained so easily, but peace had not yet come. The latter were torn by internal dissensions; everyone wanted to be on the winning side, but opinions differed as to which would win. The German star seemed to be in the ascendant, but it was dangerous for a little maritime State like Greece to offend Great Britain, the Mistress of the Seas.

One morning, towards the end of October, 1915, an anxious crowd assembled on the ridge above John's farm. Its height being more than six thousand feet



above sea-level, a distant view was obtainable in all directions over both land and sea. This morning, every eye was turned to the south-east, where, in the dim distance, a fleet of warships could be seen. It was not a great armada, and only the larger vessels were clearly visible. They were wheeling one behind the other in a circle, and from each of them in turn, when it was nearest to the coast, spurted a flash. The sky to the east and south was obscured by smoke; and the day being bright and sunny, this dark pall looked more sombre and menacing by contrast; it brooded above the sparkling sea like the clouds which herald a tornado. The target was invisible, but Papoulos explained that it must be Dedeagatch, a Bulgarian port near the mouth of the Maritza. And thus the World War came to Western Thrace.

‘What a terrible thing a warship is,’ said the monk Philip when the first shell was fired. ‘How swift, how deadly. It is sad to think that human intelligence and skill should be perverted to the manufacture of such mighty engines of destruction.’

‘It is sad to think that those ships should waste their ammunition on a few tumble-down houses,’ was the comment of Papoulos. ‘And what good are they doing? They’ve come too late. Bulgaria is committed. If that fleet had arrived six weeks ago, and not fired a single shot, it might have had some effect; but all the shells in the world can make no difference now. The Bulgars are after bigger game than Dedeagatch. The town is worth nothing, the port is useless, and most of the

people living there are Greeks. It is always the Greeks who suffer. . . .’

His remarks were cut short by a low rumbling noise among the mountains on their left as they faced the sea. At first it was like distant thunder, but, obviously, that could not be the cause, the sky being cloudless. It was approaching rapidly and from below; a storm of sound eddied round the foothills, a vague buzzing filled the valleys, punctuated by booming thuds and sudden crashes which became louder and more imminent every second. From the depths beneath the ridge’s southern rim rose a hubbub of deep-toned echoes; each cliff was a sounding-board answering roar with roar, bellow with bellow, until the tumult became deafening and the mountain quaked. Terrified women, thinking the Judgment Day had come, clutched their children and gathered round the monk, who seized the opportunity to urge repentance.

Papoulos stood apart, plunged in thought. When the bombardment had ceased, and it was not of long duration, he turned to Salomé and said:

‘This war is a struggle between a tiger and a shark; both are very powerful, and no one can yet tell for certain which is going to win. Well, let the barbarians kill each other; it’s an overcrowded world. But how rich the British are; and how they waste their money. That noise must have cost at least one hundred thousand pounds.’

‘John says in his letter that the Germans are a wonderful people and are sure to win,’ said Salomé. ‘They

have promised Salonika to Bulgaria, and of course Kavalla.'

'They'd promise anything which was not theirs to give, just as the Allies have promised Constantinople to the Russians. All Greek towns too.'

He paused for a moment, and then, as they walked down the mountain-side, went on:

'I've often thought, my Salomé, that the best course will be to make that business in the quarries over to a British company. It could be arranged quite easily; these matters are well understood in London. Of course, I'd keep a big interest, and might act as managing director; but that wouldn't stop the thing being called "All British." Once you've got the word British at the head of a prospectus, you've got security and protection, and they're worth a sacrifice in such times as these. That fleet, which is now on its way back to Lemnos, would always be at our service; it would come along and shell anyone who dared to interfere with British interests. And all the people in England would be delighted; it would make them feel proud and patriotic. They don't know how their money goes; anyhow most of them don't. But there must be some rich men behind this business—armament firms and all that crowd. Make no mistake, this country will tempt them soon; there's copper here. Yes, I think that a British company is the thing; and then we'll keep these cursed Bulgars in good order with British ships and guns. Did you see how the firing scared them? And it was nearly forty miles away.'

S M A R A N D A

After this oration, father and daughter hurried homewards, as the wind was rising and the sky had become suddenly overcast.

To the ancient Greeks, Thrace was the home of Boreas, the rude north wind. This wind, whose lightest breath strikes chill, is the scourge of the Thracian winter. The autumn days are still, and the leaves rarely fall before the middle of November. Although October had another week to run and the morning had been fair, on the evening following the bombardment of Dedeagatch, and possibly on account of it, a gale out of the north swept the Peninsula. Snow covered the high mountains and rain-storms drenched the plains. Next day the sun shone out again, but all the trees were bare.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER VI    S    THE CAVE



AFTER the bombardment of Dedeagatch, Western Thrace was like the centre of a cyclone; an ominous calm prevailed while all around were whirling storms.

By the early summer of 1917, the Bulgars and Turks were discouraged; they felt, instinctively, that they were on the losing side, and dreaded the day when Greece would join the Allies. If that should happen, and it seemed almost certain, peace had more terrors than war itself. The peasants remembered Greek reprisals after the Balkan wars.

Many fields lay fallow for want of hands to till them and oxen to draw the ploughs. The old men, the women and the bigger children earned meagre wages on the plantations of tobacco; but since the export trade had practically ceased, even this means of livelihood began to fail. By the third year of the war, the sheds at the port were full to overflowing; a fortune lay there awaiting shipment, for the price of tobacco had gone up.

Work had continued at the so-called quarries except during the winter months. Only a small gang was required for the smelting and distilling processes; it consisted of Levantines, strangers to the district, working under the direction of a Scotch foreman, named

Andrew Macpherson, who lived in the ruined chapel above the oil store. As the number of barrels increased, it became necessary to enlarge the crypt. A subterranean passage was then discovered, connecting the crypt with the cave. Andrew was working alone one evening when he came upon the entrance, which a subsidence of the soil had obstructed; but the passage itself was intact for the whole of its twenty yards of length, being cut through solid rock. It had evidently been constructed to provide direct access from the castle to the tomb, and was of sufficient height and width for a funeral cortège. At the far end a dim light could be seen filtering through the interstices between some boulders; another subsidence had blocked the outlet to the cave. Andrew did not venture down the passage by himself, and when Papoulos arrived upon the scene it was late at night.

Carrying a lantern, the Greek led the way. As he advanced hundreds of creeping, crawling animals sought refuge from the light in crevices, while larger forms of vermin scurried before him. Quite possibly, the peace of seven centuries was being disturbed for the first time by human footsteps. A few blows from Andrew's pick cleared the outlet and the two men, standing by the tomb, looked down upon the sleeping village.

'These peasants respect the dead more than they do the living,' observed Papoulos. 'I don't suppose one of them has ever set foot in here, although this great stone box may contain jewels, gold and precious stuffs as well as bones. In more civilized countries one would

require an iron gate with a padlock on a place like this; but the Turks and Bulgars are afraid of death as children are afraid of darkness, yet Heaven knows they see enough of it.'

'I don't like messing about with tombs any more than the peasants,' replied the old Scotchman. 'Take my advice, Mr. Papoulos, and seal that passage up.'

Andrew Macpherson had spent thirty years in the Near East and had made and lost several fortunes; made them because his knowledge and experience were unique; lost them because he drank and gambled. His life had been spent in cycles, each of which began with a long spell of work in a mining camp and wound up with a wild carouse in one or other of the coast towns. Then followed periods of repentance and pilgrimages to Samakov, the centre of Methodism in Bulgaria. Here he was invariably received with acclamation, as a prodigal and a brand plucked from the burning. His contributions to Methodist funds were generous, and his work as a political propagandist much appreciated. He was pro-Bulgar, like most of the British residents in the Balkans, and likened the Bulgars to the Scotch; declaring that they would dominate the Serbs and Greeks much as his countrymen did the British Isles. And so, when the war made him an official enemy, he could go anywhere in Bulgaria, with or without a passport. But he was getting old and his health was broken. This enterprise with Papoulos was his last, he hoped, and would enable him to retire with a competence.

'We can close up this end if you wish,' replied

Papoulos. 'But the passage will do well as a store; we'll fill it up with barrels, and by the time it's full the war ought to be finished. At any rate let us hope so — already I've got more tobacco at the port than I can handle.'

'Aye, it's a bad business is the war,' said Andrew, seating himself on a big stone at the entrance to the cave.

'Bad and good,' replied the Greek. 'It hangs everything up of course; but it will make a great difference to this country. Mark you, Andrew, Greece is going to join the Allies and will do so soon. It's a case of needs must; all our trade is sea-borne, and we've got to be friends with the British.'

Papoulos placed the lantern on the sarcophagus, and paced backwards and forwards in front of it like a sentry on his beat. After a pause he went on:

'I shall have to take Salomé and the children away from here when that happens; they won't be safe. I'll leave you in charge here, Andrew, until John comes back.'

'Don't take the lass away from her home,' said Andrew. 'John would never forgive her. This is her place, for good or evil; she's a Bulgar, whatever you may like to call yourself.'

'But she won't be a Bulgar long. Why, Andrew, can't you see what's coming? The Allies are going to win the war. America has joined them; in another month or so Venizelos will have brought Greece in on their side; already Greek troops are fighting in Macedonia, and soon they'll be in Western Thrace. And when the victory is won, in a year or two at latest,



Greece will be a great nation once again, and rule over the whole of Thrace, perhaps in Constantinople even, now that Russia has had a revolution. We shall have Smyrna and the trade of the Levant; how rich we'll be, men will be proud to call themselves Greek subjects. I want my grandsons to be Greeks, and John as well if he is sensible.'

'You don't know the Bulgars for all your cleverness,' broke in the Scotchman. 'I've lived out here for many years and have got to understand the people. They're a fine race and will never submit to the Greeks. With the Turks they're different; they get on well together because both of them are Asiatics, and between them they hold the mountains. You think them stupid because they don't understand your trade; but you don't understand theirs. I should have thought there was room for both of you, but it isn't so because of all the hate and envy. Aye, there are bad times coming – bloodshed and slaughter and destruction; it's fearful to think of all the waste and sorrow. There will be women and children dying while you get rich; and the men will take to the hills and join the Comitadji<sup>1</sup> Bands. Then neither life nor home will be safe for any Greeks.'

'That's why I mean to get Salomé and the children into a place of safety.'

'John is the man to say what Salomé and the children ought to do,' said Andrew, shaking out his pipe. 'Don't rouse John, Mr. Papoulos. He's a real Bulgar, and for

<sup>1</sup> Comitadji Bands consist of outlaws and freebooters who live by brigandage.

all his quiet ways could be as rough and savage as his father or his mother. I wish he were home now; sometimes I think that monk . . . But look! What's happening in the village?'

Lights shone through windows hitherto all dark; a crowd was assembling in the little square; women were calling shrilly to their children and their neighbours, and barking dogs increased the clamour. Perceiving some forms approaching stealthily along the path which led from the village to the bluff, Papoulos snatched up the lantern and whispered to Andrew – 'Come quickly, don't let them see who we are.' He then passed into the newly opened passage; and the cave, which had been brightly lit, as he retreated darkened gradually into a black blot on the hill-side.

Vlad, the old herdman, on his homeward way from tending a sick ox, had seen the light within the cave and the striding figure of Papoulos, but did not recognize him at that distance. At once he had roused the villagers from sleep, so that they might see with their own eyes a sight so strange. Hence the disturbance on this summer night in the 'Village of the Tomb.'

Had the dead risen from their last long sleep? Was that the nameless warrior who gesticulated as he talked and walked so restlessly to and fro? Surely it was his wife, sitting there listening. Thus the women; and thinking of absent husbands, sons and brothers, they imagined this resurrection was a portent, and wondered how the monk Philip would explain it. But more marvels were to come – as the light faded slowly in the

recesses of the cave, a female form in flowing robes appeared on the bluff above it, close by the oak tree; and many thought they saw an angel, so light and graceful was her shape, so delicate her poise. Then the more hardy spirits who had ventured nearer, returned to say the tomb was closed, but that a faint smoke hung round with a smell of sulphur. And all crossed themselves in fear and trembling. But when a boy reported it was Salomé who stood upon the bluff, hatred and jealousy gained the upper hand. The old men, grown bold again, shook their fists threateningly in her direction; and the women screamed out that she was a witch, and should be burned. Their strident voices reached Salomé, who fled dismayed.

She had been sitting with Philip on the verandah, waiting for her father. They had heard the murmur from the village, sounds so unusual at that late hour, that the monk had left to ascertain their cause, while she crossed the garden to the oak tree. As she hastily retraced her steps, Papoulos and Andrew emerged from the ruined chapel. The shrill voices in the village were still audible, and losing her habitual self-control she called out to Papoulos:

‘Father, father, do you hear what they are saying? They call me a witch and want to burn me.’

The Greek listened with a stern, set face, and putting his arm around her muttered:

‘Do you hear that, Andrew?’

Turning to Salomé, the Scotchman said:

‘They’ll no hurt you, my bonny lassie. Don’t be

afraid; it's just a lot of women cackling after being waked up in the middle of the night.' Nevertheless, the old man's look belied his confident words. Papoulos rounded on him savagely.

'So you think I can leave my only daughter here and have a moment's peace of mind? Salomé, my child, pack up your things and get the children ready to start for the coast before dawn.'

A few moments later Philip returned. At first he attempted to dissuade Papoulos from his sudden resolve, and even suggested that Salomé should bring her two boys to the hospice where he lived himself. Andrew laughed derisively at this suggestion, and Papoulos would not entertain it for a moment.

Silence reigned once more in the village. Maria, the old Greek nurse, busied herself with preparations for the journey. Papoulos, Andrew and Philip watched on the verandah; Salomé wrote a letter, explaining her departure to John, who was with his regiment on the heights above Monastir.

Six years of married life had taught her her husband's limitations. She had never been in love with him; she found him stupid and too animal. Her feeling for him was less wifely than maternal; but in it there was an element of fear.

She wrote — 'I am going away with the children because it is not safe to stay here. When you return, I will come back, unless you will come to my father's house. . . .' And so on, with news of the children and advice about his health; John might have been a child.

Just at the end, some doubts assailed her. This was the first time she had left their home, and she remembered how, on a previous occasion, he had fired up at the bare idea that she should go away. So she repeated, 'I will come back,' and wrote the words a third time even, assuring him that if the farm required her presence, he had only to send a message. It was perhaps the kindest letter she had written to him during his absence at the war.

An hour later the party left the farm-house; the women and children mounted on two mules, the three men on foot. They passed through the sleeping village without being noticed. Two miles farther on, when the main road had been reached, and the town among the foothills was visible in the clear light of dawn, Andrew and Philip turned back, their escort being no longer needed.

From this point southwards, the power and importance of Papoulos increased with every mile. In the little township, while he sat in the house of his dead wife's sister, men hurried to find a carriage and the wealthiest citizens came to see him. In this community of traders he was a prophet and a leader. Even Salomé was surprised at the deference paid to him. She knew he was rich; but since that evening, nearly three years before, when he had told her he was richer than she knew, Papoulos had extended his operations, had traded with both sides, had cornered the necessities of life, had fished in troubled waters, and was now a man to whom thousands looked for example and advice. His

agents were everywhere in the Levant, in banks and shipping offices and bazaars. When his name was mentioned, many pricked their ears; but of those who professed to know him, few would have recognized him.

They reached the sea-port in the evening, and went to the modest house where Salomé had spent her childhood.

'You shall have a larger, cooler residence close to the sea in a day or two,' said Papoulos. 'I've been having it prepared for months past. See, there it is.' He pointed to a promontory, east of the town, on whose southern extremity, where the cliffs fell sheer, a large white building could be seen.

'Why, it's the old Turkish palace,' cried Salomé.

'It's mine now, and some day will be yours,' replied Papoulos.

As Andrew and Philip climbed the footpath leading to the farm, their conversation turned on politics – a safer topic than religion for these two men.

'The Bulgars have been tricked by that old fox Ferdinand,' observed the Scotchman. 'I hope the Allies won't let the Greeks have it all their own way in Western Thrace. The British ought to back the Bulgars; they are the only Balkan people who can keep the Turks in order and live at peace with them.'

'If the Allies win, and I fear they may,' replied Philip, 'Greece and Servia will get Macedonia, and that will mean another war.'

'Yes, there will always be war where the Greeks try

to rule Bulgars or Turks. The Greeks don't know how to govern, but only how to get rich. It's a thousand pities; this country could be made the greatest industrial area in south-eastern Europe. It's full of metals; why, there are old workings everywhere. The Turks killed the metal business five centuries ago, but the stuff is still in the ground. A British Protectorate is wanted; then everything would be properly developed, and everyone would be busy and happy instead of snarling.'

While he was speaking, the sun rose above the tops of the eastern mountains and flooded the broad valley on their right with dazzling light. A valley fifteen miles across, running in a north-easterly direction, sheltered from the cold, cutting winds and fanned by zephyrs, flat and low-lying, its rich alluvial soil traversed by innumerable water-courses. It looked what, indeed, it was — a natural forcing house where anything could be made to grow.

'Do you want to destroy that with smoking chimneys?' asked the monk, pointing eastwards.

'Aye, it's fine, I'll allow; but further inland, where there's less water, what's the good of agriculture? The two things could go together if only the Greeks and Bulgars would not fight. But fight they will, that's the one thing certain in a world of change.'

They reached the farm-house a few minutes later.

'Well, Mr. Philip,' said Andrew, looking around him, 'I suppose I am master here until John returns. If you would care to continue our disputations on religious matters these fine summer evenings, the pleasure will

be mine. I'm only a poor miserable sinner, but the likes of me are often the means of grace.'

'Thank you,' replied the monk. 'This evening I must write to John in order to explain what happened last night and Salomé's departure. A man from the front returns there to-night and will take Salomé's letter also. To-morrow I will go back to the monastery for a week's retreat.'

'Prayer and fasting, eh? Aye, aye, I understand; you want to mortify the flesh. I didn't think Salomé ought to go away either, until I heard those women howling curses. John will be fair mad when he learns she's gone. He'll desert to get back home if need be. These Bulgars are funny folk about their women. But you know all about that of course, being a Bulgar yourself.'

'I am a member of the Bulgarian Church and my father was a Macedonian merchant,' Philip answered.

'Where was his place of business, then?'

'In Castoria. He was in the furriery trade and had a large connection with America.'

'Your father a merchant in Castoria! And was your mother a Russian lady, the daughter of the big furrier from Moscow?'

'Yes, that is so. After my father's death she settled in Vienna, for my education, and is living there still.'

'Well, if that isn't amazing. Why, I mind your parents well, Mr. Philip. And to think that I should only find it out to-day after all these months.' He paused for a moment, and then went on reflectively.



'Your father must have been a very rich man when he died.'

'Yes, very rich; most of his money is invested in America.'

'I suppose it's yours now, or most of it anyhow. What I can't understand, in all these circumstances, is why you ever became a monk.'

As Philip made no answer, Andrew added:

'I always thought that in your church the monks were not allowed to work among the people; that they had to be priests and married before they could go into the houses of the women.'

Flushing slightly, Philip explained that he had had special permission from the Bulgarian Ex-Arch in Constantinople. This, so far from satisfying Andrew, provoked an outburst.

'Special permission for a fine-looking young man like you, Mr. Philip, why it's ridiculous.' Then fixing his keen, grey eyes upon the monk's, the old Scotchman continued: 'I'm thinking it was best for you also that Salomé went away. You're a man as well as a monk, and she's a lovely creature; looks cold, but isn't, if I'm any judge of women. She's like that store of naphtha under the chapel yonder – full of Greek fire.'

A spasm contracted Philip's face. Abruptly, without a word of farewell, he turned away from Andrew, and strode across an open space, between them and the forest, where nodding cyclamen grew wild upon the mountain-side.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER VII ~ THE PALACE BY THE SEA



SALOMÉ's new abode was situated on a lofty promontory almost due south of the 'Village of the Tomb.' Viewed from a distance or on misty days, this wooded peninsula has the appearance of an island, another Thasos, so low-lying is the adjacent coast-line and the valley trending north-east along its landward side. Indeed, at one time, it must have been almost an island — before the land encroached upon the sea and changed a gulf into a plain; when the buried city was a sea-port and argosies cast anchor not three miles from John's farm. Curving from east to north, a low ridge links up the promontory with the mountains, and, rising sinuously, reaches the terraces that buttress the central mass.

The headland terminates abruptly in a high steep cliff. During the Roman occupation, the summit of this cliff was the site of a beacon forming part of a system of signals along the coast of Thrace. Here, flames have cast their glare by night on sea and sky and shore, and fed with driftwood and great logs the blaze soared high, shedding a cataract of sparks, flashing the news of victories in Asia on to Imperial Rome.

After an interval of many centuries, a Turkish Pasha built in this secluded spot his summer residence — half

palace with its cupola and arcade fronting the south and the Ægean; behind the southern façade, half a prison, for here, two wings, windowless on their outer faces, and a high northern wall enclose a courtyard as difficult of ingress as of egress without permission from the master.

Papoulos found the building in a state of ruin and decay, but had it converted into a sumptuous modern mansion where he dispensed a lavish hospitality. The outlay he could well afford, for his fortune had increased by leaps and bounds after Greece joined the Allies. As a contractor for supplies, millions had poured into his coffers; and by the time the Armistice was signed his wealth had made him an international figure of importance. Then new vistas opened out; he took up politics and acquired a newspaper in Salonika, a patriotic journal whose proclaimed mission was the revival of the old Hellenic spirit. Profits and patriotism went hand in hand. For the success of a new enterprise he envisaged, it was essential that the claims of Greece to Western Thrace should be made good. To achieve this purpose he spent money freely — bribing the needy, corrupting the ambitious, pandering to vanity and greed. His methods proved irresistible; the great and powerful sought his counsel, and men and women fawned and sponged on him, who a few years before would not have touched his hand.

Around the palace on the promontory a legend grew. From passing ships, sailors stared at this bower of ease upon the cliff, by day a white and gleaming shell against a noble sweep of hills, by night a cave of light, whence

floated music as alluring as the fabled syren's song. It was a haunt of luxury and delight, where dwelt a woman said to be the rich Greek's daughter. That she was lovely to behold, no one denied, not even the envious of her sex, whose malice found vent in warnings to their menfolk against a dangerous adventuress, a modern Armida in Paris frocks. But they did not deter thereby the officers of the Allied fleets and armies from seeking eagerly to see her; these came and left to come again, gazed in Salomé's eyes, were baffled by her mystery, drank deep to get assurance and found some foolish words. A few young Englishmen talked to her of marriage. Poor boys! To them, no doubt, after four years of war, the toils of a sorceress seemed a minor risk.

Later, when peace became assured, the parasites of the war — financiers, titled refugees and women of the lighter sort flocked to the house. These visitors arrived by sea; access by land was difficult, and intentionally so; the single, narrow mountain path had fallen into disrepair, and was dangerous for all who were not sure of foot.

Salomé was in her element and unabashed either by splendour or male adulation. She managed the vast establishment of her father far more efficiently than her husband's farm. The latter was visible, on clear days, from the hilltop behind the house. Returning late one evening from a walk, she saw lights against the blackness of the mountains below the North Star. That night she asked her father what was happening at the farm. Papoulos replied that it might be Andrew and his gang storing more oil in the chapel crypt, and added, 'I hope

the old man isn't getting drunk.' But Salomé wondered. There were so many lights which flared like torches; she thought they might mean the return of John — John on his horse, and looking as he used to look when he rode into the town among the foothills. That was the memory she cherished, a memory of her girlhood, when she had nearly loved her husband, when she was half afraid of him and his sudden fits of rage.

During the autumn of 1919, Papoulos' absences from home were long and frequent, his presence being required in Paris at the Conference of Peace. There, the Greeks had triumphed, their success appeared complete and final. Yet Salomé found it difficult to believe that the Bulgars would accept defeat. Few of them had returned to the 'Village of the Tomb,' so Philip wrote; the majority were outlaws in the mountains, and, if she knew them, nursing a fell revenge.

One afternoon, in late November, Salomé was sitting alone on the arcade waiting for the arrival of Papoulos with some important guests. They were coming from Salonika by sea in the Greek's steam yacht. She was glad that this last period of solitude would soon be ended. The isolation of the house preyed on her nerves. Often of late she had had nightmares, in which, while powerless to move or speak, rough hands seized her, eyes gloated malignantly on her person, and cries of vengeance, mingled with wondering exclamations, rang in her ears. And the passion of relief on waking was disturbed by a feeling of oppression; which she attributed to the mountains — they were so near, and so

encompassing. She had now come to look upon the sea as her one way of escape.

That afternoon, the Ægean spread out enticingly; but she who knew its many moods looked anxiously towards the south, where dark clouds hung and whence there came a long low swell, invisible until it broke, murmuring sullenly, churning white foam among the jagged rocks.

Papoulos had had a jetty built, a grandiose affair with marble steps, from which there ran a ropeway with a travelling cage up to the level of the house. There was a path as well, rough, steep, and overgrown from little use; it zig-zagged between bushy shrubs, and when the myrtles were in flower was a leafy, hidden way. Salome often ascended by this path, with hair dishevelled by the wind and looking, as the Greek nurse used to say, like a spirit from the sea.

The look-out man had just reported that the yacht was rounding the cape some ten miles to the west, when the bell at the landward entrance clanged. This bell was a relic of the Turkish Pasha and less a house-bell than an alarm. It hung in a wooden belfry over the arched gateway in the courtyard's northern wall; its echo was seldom heard and was the more disturbing for its rarity. A minute later, Salomé's eldest boy, who had been playing with his brother in the courtyard, rushed through the house excitedly, calling out – 'Mother, Mother, who do you think has come to see us? You'll never guess – it's Brother Philip.'

Filled with forebodings, Salomé went to greet the

unexpected visitor. When she reached the flight of steps leading down to the courtyard, Philip was talking to the nurse and younger child with his back towards her; but as though some other sense than sight revealed her presence to him, he turned at once, stood motionless and stared at her with hungry eyes.

He had last seen her in the garments of a Bulgarian farmer's wife, garments which surely must have been designed to allay the anxieties of jealous husbands. The white dress she now wore was a work of art in its simplicity and suggestions; it half concealed her bosom, left her arms bare, and was gathered by a girdle round her waist. The lower part of her slim form was still in shadow, but the sunlight dappled by the trees glowed in her dusky hair. Her eyes were kind and welcoming, not cold and starry as they often looked; their colour, answering to her mood, had deepened from pale blue to violet. Although, as ever, she was pale, her pallor had a quality of warmth, and passed through imperceptible gradations from the faint flush that tinged her cheeks and ears to snowy whiteness on her breast.

Then, silent still, the monk approached and kissed her outstretched hand; to which unmonkish gesture she responded with a low tinkling laugh, and broke the spell.

\*

On the arcade above the sea Philip gave his message — John had sent him to tell her to come back. For a moment Salomé did not reply; then she asked — ‘Does he want me to return to the farm?’

'For a few days only. Neither you nor John can live there any longer, unless he becomes a Greek subject; that is the effect of the Treaty which has just been signed.'

'Then where are the children and myself to go?'

'To a refugee camp in Bulgaria.'

Again there was a pause. Salomé was not given to putting unnecessary questions, and she knew that John would never call himself a Greek; she also had no illusions as to what life would be like in a camp of Bulgarian refugees.

'John told me to say,' continued Philip, 'that you had promised to return, and of course the children will come with you. They too are Bulgars. It will be a great change from this,' he added, 'and very hard at first, but ease and luxury are not the things that matter.'

'Why did not John come himself?'

'He was afraid of being arrested. You've no idea of what is happening in our district. There are Greek soldiers in the village; they are rough and brutal and take everything from the peasants. It is far worse than the war. Nothing is safe, neither property, nor life, nor honour. Most of our men have joined the "Comitadji" bands; John has gone with them, he is one of the leaders. His band lives in the mountains behind the farm among the quarries. The people are so desperate, they no longer fear the echoes they call voices. To-night, several bands are being concentrated for an attack on the town where you used to live. Under cover of that I will take you to the farm. John will



meet us with horses on the main road in the valley; it is too dangerous for him to come nearer to this house. That is our plan.'

Salomé was standing by a column while the monk sat on a chair. 'It is a plan which takes a lot for granted,' she said at length, and added – 'I must leave you now. The yacht with my father and our guests is arriving; see, it is quite close to the jetty.'

'Papoulos here?' said Philip, rising hastily. 'We thought he was in Paris.'

'My father left Paris five days ago and travels quickly; he is not delayed like ordinary men. Come with me to my own apartments before I go to meet him. There you can rest and will not be seen.'

Perplexed by these unexpected tidings and uncertain what course to pursue, Philip followed her to the eastern end of the arcade.

Left by himself he watched the yacht approach. Its engines had already ceased to throb and the vessel was gliding noiselessly upon a sombre sea. To the monk it seemed a phantom ship, a fabric too light and exquisite for common use, a fitting vehicle for Salomé, whose white-clad form stood out against an ashen background down by the marble stair.

Philip was weary, having done twenty miles on foot since dawn; he passed through a French window into the richly furnished room which had been placed at his disposal, and lay down on a low divan to rest his aching limbs. When Salomé returned she found him sleeping, his head thrown back, his black beard hanging limply,

his arms and legs extended, an image of fatigue. Although his face was deeply lined it had not lost its youthfulness; the full lips with the chin relaxed gave just a hint of sensuality; between them shone a row of strong, white teeth, and the monk seemed to smile. Salomé had never seen that smile before; the sleeping man revealed a new side of himself to her observant eyes.

Calling Maria, Salomé told her not to rouse him, but when he woke to bring him food and wine.

'He looks like the blessed St. Anthony,' mumbled the old woman. Her respect for Philip was unbounded and he was in good hands.

Night had fallen when the monk awoke, and cleansed and refreshed sat waiting for Salomé. From the far end of the arcade came voices and frequent peals of laughter; the rich Greek's guests were making merry, their central star a refugee Grand Duke. From time to time an orchestra composed of the latter's less fortunate countrymen in exile played Russian music – suave, plaintive melodies, Cossack dances, tempestuous questioning themes, all tinged with melancholy and Eastern fatalism. Sometimes the rhythmic undertone was slow, resembling the beat of oars swung to a boatman's song on placid evening waters; then it would quicken, rise to a crescendo, and give the illusion of a host of horsemen galloping on a steppe.

When Philip renounced the pleasures of the world, he had come to regard music as voluptuous, and his love for it as a besetting sin. Now, in the perfumed atmo-

sphere of Salomé's boudoir, his brain and body warmed by generous wine, it reasserted its old sway, and brought back memories of song and dance, of revels in Vienna in the days of his hot youth.

He was struggling vainly to divert his thoughts to the intervening years of abstinence and austerity, when Salomé entered the dimly lighted room. For a moment he was dazzled. Gems sparkled on her head, encircled her bare neck and arms, studded her robe of shimmering silk. She focussed all the light; the slightest movement of her body produced a rippling coruscation. And coming in from outer darkness, she seemed an apparition of the night, gleaming like a cascade that flashes through forest trees beneath a frosty moon.

'My father is not here,' she said. 'He stayed at the Little Port because of the news from the interior; he must have heard about your plan. The yacht is going back for him to-night.'

'Then we still have time,' cried Philip. 'Come with me now, Salomé. Leave this accursed palace for your proper home. The mountains may be rough, but their air is pure and fresh; would to God that I had never left them. The people may be harsh and cruel, but they are your people and your children's. Here everything is artificial. Fine clothes and jewels may delight you now, but they will do so only for awhile; they are the trappings of debauchery, vain baubles which ensnare, the Devil's bait for women's souls.'

His voice rose to a high falsetto as he pleaded, and

then commanded – ‘Get ready quickly. There is no time to lose. To-morrow you will be in safety.’

‘Safety! Safety for me, the witch they want to burn!’ replied Salomé. ‘How can you talk like that? It is true I promised John I would return, but to the farm, and not to wander as a fugitive in the mountains, or to live in a filthy camp where my children would soon die from exposure and disease. And you, who used to be my friend, you ask me to do this?’

‘I have brought you John’s message, and am here to take you to your husband and the father of your children. If you will not come back with me, I must go alone. What is your answer?’

‘I will not return to John in these conditions. That is the answer you can give him.’

‘Then he must decide what next to do, and I fear greatly he will be driven to desperate courses. He is so changed; the war and leadership have made a man of him; he is no longer doubting and irresolute. He loves you fiercely, jealously, regards you as the most precious of his possessions, even more so than his children. Nothing will daunt him in the way of danger, and his men will follow wherever he may lead. I dread the effect my news will have upon him; but I must start at once and give your message; it may mean a change of plan.’

They had been standing while he spoke. Outside, the wind was blowing in fitful gusts, and through the French window came a current of cold air. Salomé shivered slightly – ‘I’m cold,’ she murmured.

Philip’s black cloak was lying on the divan where he

had slept; it was travel-stained and much the worse for wear. Salomé reached her hand out for it, saying – ‘The same old cloak, I do believe, that you were wearing when we first met. How much has happened since. I did not know then what the world was, what it could give. In those days you were so anxious for my safety and wanted me to go away; but now you want to take me back. Are you no longer my good friend? What has changed you, Philip?’

Never before had Salomé addressed him thus. Like other women, she had always called him ‘Father.’ The monk took up the cloak with trembling hands. ‘I’m cold,’ she said again. ‘Won’t you lend it to me while we sit and talk?’

As he made to wrap her in it, she turned her face towards him and his fingers touched her naked shoulders. That contact, the fragrance she exhaled, the smouldering fire in her half-closed eyes, made his brain reel. Passions long dormant and pent-up surged within him; possessed by a fury of desire, he lost all self-control and became mad. Forgetting his mission and his vows, he, Philip the monk, the dreamer, the ascetic, crushed her slight body to his own, and between burning kisses called her his queen, his lovely one, the dear light of his eyes. And Salomé, no longer indifferent and disdainful, yielded herself, returned his passionate caresses, and whispered subtle flatteries in his ear.

\*

An hour later, Philip was travelling westward in the yacht towards the Little Port. Salomé had persuaded

him to return this way without much difficulty; he was glad of any pretext to postpone a meeting with the friend he had betrayed. Indeed, he who was usually a counsellor had found himself agreeing passively to everything she proposed. She had reasoned with him while they walked together down the steep path towards the jetty. When she said – ‘Our secret must never be divulged, my Philip. I cannot now return to John, and you must help me to stay away,’ he acquiesced. Moreover, he was going to obey her last injunction – ‘When you see my father, tell him to send Greek soldiers to protect this house.’

Alone once more, Philip tried desperately to think. He went forward to the bows and looked ahead across the dark expanse of water, hoping thereby to fix his thoughts on some future course of action. But some power stronger than his will turned his eyes back towards the scene of his transgression. Although it seared his vision, he gazed at the receding line of light upon the hillside with a dull fixed stare, vacant and purposeless. The future was a blank, the past forgotten up to the moment of his crime. Round that his thoughts revolved. A miracle had happened: Salomé, whom he had reverently adored as the incarnation of his boyish dreams of loveliness, for whose presence he had been grateful as for a gift of God, and in whose absence he had pined; this wonderful and exquisite Salomé had come to him, robed and bejewelled like a queen, more splendid to behold than any princess in a picture or female saint gleaming upon a stained glass window; and

he, heated with unaccustomed wine, had fallen from the serene, high places into sensual depths.

At first he had been conscious of a guilty rapture; but soon the mood of exultation passed and self-reproach subdued male vanity. He saw himself as a seducer, a faithless friend, a perjured priest. It never crossed his mind to blame Salomé, or to suspect that she, in order to make him her accomplice, had contrived that night's debauch. This last humiliation he was spared. The man could cheat himself and find thereby a source of consolation. Not so the monk. As the yacht sped westward, each moment brought realities more near, robbed sin of all its glow and glamour, revealed his irretrievable disaster, sharpened the agony of remorse.

The daughter of Papoulos watched the yacht fade into the night, then turned to climb the path between the myrtle hedges, her cheeks aflame. In her father's house she had met many sorts of men, had had her fill of wooing, knew all the arts of professional seducers, and the carnal, inarticulate devotion of simpler males whom her beauty had inflamed. But Philip had been a new experience. Through him, for the first time, she had caught a glimpse of love long-cherished, unconfessed, fed by imagination and romance; love like a spark within a husk of discipline and custom, which for her own purposes she had fanned into consuming fire. She recalled the moment of farewell, when he, knowing that they would never meet again, described their parting as 'a little death.' His adoration thrilled her still; he had imparted some of his own despair and sorrow;

remembering his white, set face, for a brief moment she forgot all the material things she prized, and a rare pang of pity gripped her heart.

Then her thoughts turned to John. She had gained time; her husband's plan had failed. She thought of him waiting at the roadside, starting at any sound which might herald her approach, and pictured his helpless rage and disappointment as the hours passed; but she had no qualms in reaching the decision that it was better to leave him there in doubt. He might imagine that Philip had had an accident, or that she and the children were away from home. Thus did her instinct of self-preservation regain its sway, effacing all but selfish fears. Under its influence she forgot her husband and her dupe.

Though she was physically fearless and accustomed to being alone, that solitary place dismayed her. The gale that threatened in the afternoon was nearing fast. It was a night to daunt the stoutest heart — one of those nights on which, according to *Ægean* fishermen, this sea is lashed to sudden fury by a monster who lurks beneath its surface always, a feline monster, fawning, treacherous, prepared to spring while feigning to caress.

She hurried on till forced to pause for breath, and looking back beheld a scene of awe-inspiring splendour. A broad beam of light projected from the mansion overhead; it lit up a wide expanse of sea, but left the cliff in shadow. Below, round the cliff's base, the shadows deepened, so that where land and water met the turmoil was invisible. On the sea, huge slate-coloured waves,



like sullen, heaving, snow-capped hills, emerged from the obscure horizon and approached swiftly in monstrous undulations. As they drew nearer, the more vivid light dispelled their slaty phosphorescence and kindled inner fires; and then, their lambent fronts resembled concave walls of dark green porphyry, where veins of glinting crystal interwove, and rising, multiplied, until they met in a continuous scintillation along each flickering crest. For the last stage of their wild course these sea-horses formed ranks, arrayed themselves in far-flung lines, arched their proud necks before the final onslaught, and raced northward through the zone of light, tossing their manes of foam.

Out of the darkness sprang whirling clouds of spray, which were carried by the rising wind higher and higher up the cliff. It seemed to Salomé that the waves pursued her, and that, though cheated of their prey, at the supreme moment of self-destruction, they strove to reach her, if it were only with the vapour of their dissipated force. The roar of breakers and the hissing of their backwash joined with the moaning of the wind; a surge of sound eddied around the cliff and swept thence inland along the wooded ridge. Here, echoing boulders swelled the tumult, and creaking boughs and rustling leaves passed on the message from the sea — a message of wrath and menace, out of the depths, borne upward to the summits, uttered by Nature's most tremendous voices, deep-toned, implacable, pronouncing judgment, calling for vengeance on John's wife.

Again the guilty woman fled. Above her head the

myrtle branches formed an occludent canopy, and made the path a sinuous tunnel wherein were pent the uproar of the gale and glimmerless obscurity. Frantically, like a blinded bird that soars and soars because it cannot see, she climbed through this dark solitude, longing for light, however garish, and for companionship, however low. In her father's house was sanctuary; for there, surrounded by his guests, with servants at her beck and call, within high walls, she would be safe and might forget two men — one who had left her, and one who sought her still.

Breathless and quivering, she reached the arcade's eastern end and sank exhausted on the ground. Throughout its spacious length it was unoccupied, and the French windows on its inner side were closed against the storm. The hanging lamps swayed with the wind, pillars and festoons cast a double shadow, one fixed and black, the other vague and moving, upon the luminous strip without and on the ceiling, painted pale blue, with fleecy clouds and birds, to counterfeit a summer sky.

She peered into the room where she had been with Philip. Beyond it, through the communicating door which led to her bed-chamber, she saw Maria waiting; fearing that the old nurse would keep her there, or take her to the children to see them in their sleep, she crept away.

In the dining-room, three men were still seated at the table. One was an obese Levantine, a mixture of Christian, Jew and Turk, a product of centuries of

invasions and at least one crusade. He was talking volubly with much gesticulation; one of the listeners was obviously an American, the other, a bluff, hearty-looking man, had keen blue eyes and an assertive nose above his waxed moustache. On the farther wall hung the latest portrait of Papoulos; and so well had the artist caught his habitual attitude and expression, that there might have been four men in that room, all different types, and yet with this in common – the master of the house looked like an eagle, the other three resembled less noble birds of prey.

At the western extremity of the arcade, a wicket in the balustrade was open. Here the cliff fell sheer, and all the vegetation had been cleared to give free passage to the cage that ran between the house and jetty. The rocks below were normally above sea-level, only the largest breakers reached them; this night they were frequently submerged by giant waves, which broke and ebbed, leaving a wreath of sea-foam upon their streaming sides.

Facing the wicket was the main reception room where the Grand Duke held his court. Some couples were dancing to a jazz band, gliding with gloomy rapture on the polished floor, locked in a tight embrace; others reclined promiscuously on divans. Rare tapestries hung on the walls, depicting scenes of Chinese life – two mandarins in robes of red, pagodas, peacocks, women at a well. These, like the other furnishings, were spoils of war and revolution, acquired out of widespread ruin and ransacked Russian homes. After a

violent gust or crashing peal of thunder, a ripple crossed their glowing texture, and the figures appeared to move – the women stooped lower, the peacocks swayed their tails, and the mandarins nodded pig-tailed heads with celestial unconcern. The men and women assembled there were the usual post-war types, but in this setting they appeared grotesque. It had needed a vast confusion in the world for them to be able to disport themselves on a promontory in Thrace.

Salomé had just reached the wicket, meaning to close it before entering the house, when, for the second time that day, the bell in the courtyard clanged. The sudden, unexpected sound arrested her least movement; she remained rooted to the spot, surmising some sinister development, a prey to deadly fear.

Some one was at the northern gateway who was not her father; some one surefooted on a narrow mountain path, to whom ravines and swollen torrents were not impassable, even on that dark night; some one impatient and imperative, no suppliant this, but one who claimed admittance as a right; some one not easily deterred, whose fierce determination she could feel in that relentless, ruthless clangour, which seemed to hush the very elements and stifled ribald mirth.

Those resonant, metallic notes had petrified the revel also: the musicians ceased to scrape and blow, the dancers stood stock still. An anxious silence reigned throughout the mansion, save for the echoes of the bell. All ears were strained, listening to an outcry, faint at first, but growing louder, and coming from the court-

yard – men shouting, women screaming, the tramp of hurrying feet.

Salomé cowered by the wicket. That bell was like a hammer, each clang a blow shattering illusions of security, dissolving confidence in the sanctuary afforded by her father's house. As trumpets caused the walls of Jericho to fall, so did this tocsin at the gate break down, expose the flimsiness of the barriers of wealth. A score of flunkeys could not save her, still less the sodden men and wanton women who were her father's guests.

Ah ! If those nightmare visions were true portents, calamity, swift retribution, cruel, appalling, unescapable, had now descended from the mountains to the Palace by the Sea.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER VIII    S    VENGEANCE



ON arriving at the Little Port, Papoulos was met by his agent and the officer commanding the local garrison, a corpulent Greek colonel. Their report as to the state of affairs in the interior was such that Papoulos decided to proceed himself to the town in the foothills. At the same time, orders were given for the yacht to proceed to the promontory and land his guests.

According to the Colonel, the Agent was suffering from nerves and exaggerated the seriousness of the situation; but the soldier had yielded to the entreaties of the civilian and sent reinforcements.

'How many and when?' asked Papoulos.

'A Company, at 2 p.m. to-day,' was the answer.

'Too few and too late, as usual,' commented the trader. 'Telegraph to Salonika at once for 1,000 troops with some artillery, and send every available man in this place up north at once. I will be there to give them orders. You soldiers are all the same. What is that General at Salonika doing? Drawing his salary and looking pompous, I'll be bound. Driving about in a motor-car, inspecting; one would think we kept our soldiers to be looked at.'

'Your Excellency's orders shall be obeyed,' said the

Colonel obsequiously, 'but I can assure you the situation is well in hand.'

'Fiddlesticks. The whole country is up in arms. Todor the Macedonian and Fouad the Turk have joined forces, and they outnumber your men by three to one. In a district like this the situation is never in hand, and unceasing vigilance is needed. You people never foresee and never prevent; you wait until trouble comes, and then you have your little war and get promotion. If I had my way, no General or Colonel would draw his salary while any sort of fighting was in progress. They'd look ahead then all right, and the League of Nations would have some chance.'

At the town in the foothills panic prevailed. Greek families were packing up their valuables and preparing for flight to the sea-ports. The disorder was being artfully fomented by emissaries from the 'Bands,' whose operations were being directed by some one of no ordinary intelligence.

Papoulos reached the town just before sunset, and his first inquiry was after John. He was informed that his son-in-law had been reported in the neighbourhood of the town that afternoon. At the house of his relatives the Greek found a caretaker, the family had left.

'In which direction did they go?' he asked.

'North,' was the laconic answer.

'That was on John's advice, I'm sure. And what are his movements?'

'He was going south this afternoon with twenty men.'

'But I should have met him then on the main road.'

'No, Excellency. Mr. John went by the track which crosses the railway ten miles south of here. Perhaps he was going to destroy the big bridge over the river . . .'

But Papoulos cut his speculations short; he guessed at once where John had gone, and why. 'I should have known that,' he muttered to himself.

Salomé was in danger, had to be saved at any cost. His property, his own life, were as nothing in the balance. A hundred soldiers were sent off at once to the Palace by the Sea.

Then the Greek set to work to restore some order in affairs too long neglected by himself.

Towards midnight, a burst of rifle fire was heard on the northern outskirts of the town; the firing ceased and broke out afresh in other directions. Dogs began barking furiously. The Greek outposts had been surprised and rushed. A few minutes later an armed band passed swiftly down the main street, and occupied the municipal buildings with little opposition.

Papoulos had not retired. He was in his counting-house. Wealth to a great extent is paper. In his strong boxes there were documents and leases whose money value at that moment might be nothing, but which, if reinforcements arrived promptly, would be considerable.

When the Comitadjis poured into the town, he still remained calm and self-possessed, explaining to those who urged him to take flight that the outlaws did not know that he was there. But for once Papoulos had miscalculated; he underestimated his own ill-fame and the



hate that he inspired. There were men and women in the town that night from the 'Village of the Tomb,' who, when they heard of his presence, neglected other prey and dragged him from his house.

In the Town Hall a tribunal had been established. The Mayor had found a cousin in the leader of one band; the Chief of Police had met a long lost brother; terrified householders were welcoming the bandits as relatives and friends. In Thrace, relationships and politics are mixed, especially in the towns. During these troubled times, a man was frequently a staunch supporter of the Greeks one morning and a Bulgarian patriot the next. When the alternative to conversion is to be hanged, the most sincere may be excused if they prove versatile.

Before his judges and their informers Papoulos did not quail. Someone had whispered in his ear that reinforcements were on the way, and he had answered – 'What of my daughter, is she safe?'

The trial was soon over. The Comitadjis scattered in search of loot, except for one small group of men whose fierce, malignant scrutiny of the Greek had never been relaxed. These laid hold of him, and thrusting him into a cart drove off towards the 'Village of the Tomb.' On the way others joined them.

Escort and cart filed through the deserted village and climbed the track that led up to the bluff.

There were no lights in the farm-house, but the chapel was illuminated faintly by a light from below. Some one was in the crypt, and some one talking loudly.

It was Andrew, addressing an imaginary congregation, describing the pitfalls which men should avoid – the wiles of women and the curse of drink; urging repentance and return to the straight and narrow path. There the old Scotsman stood alone, wrestling in spirit, his white hair tousled, bleary-eyed and flushed. Andrew was very drunk.

Hearing voices in the garden, he stumbled up the steps. The Bulgars, seeing his condition, laughed derisively; but they did not molest him, he was well-known to them and regarded as a friend.

When Andrew recognized Papoulos he would have rushed to greet him, but was pushed back.

'Mr. Papoulos,' he called out, 'you're very welcome. For months I've been up here alone, wondering what was going to happen. There are sore troubles in this land, and I want to get away; yes, I want to go to Samakov, and give my personal testimony to the good people there. I'm a poor miserable sinner, an old drunkard, not fit to be trusted with things that burn. I'm failing; yes, I'm failing. John was through here the other day. He's a dour, hard man. Is this his place, I'd like to know, or is it yours? Yon priest don't come here often now, not since the bonny lassie left. I know 'un; I know 'un. He's like the rest of us, a rutting animal, after the petticoats, the same old game. I told 'un so, to his face, and now he never comes to see me. Gone to a love-feast, I dare say; and he, who talked of prayer and fasting . . .'

One of the Bulgars interrupted, saying in the local

patois – ‘Give us a rope, Mr. Andrew. We’re here to hang a man in Turkish fashion.’

Andrew replied in the same language – ‘I have no rope with which to hang a man. Remember the Commandment, “Thou shalt not kill.” ’

Again the Comitadjis laughed, and some went off towards the stable in search of what they needed.

Speaking English, Papoulos addressed himself to Andrew. ‘Expect no mercy from these men,’ he said, ‘they have had none themselves. They mean to hang me, but even now it may not be too late to stop them. There are soldiers near at hand; make some signal which they can see.’

Andrew stared at him stupidly. ‘Is it you they are going to hang, Mr. Papoulos?’ he stuttered. ‘Gosh! I might have known it was; you’re the Devil himself to all these Bulgars. But you’ve been a fair man to me. I’ll make a signal that everyone will mark. Even these poor benighted creatures have heard of the burning bush; to-night they’ll see a burning mount.’

The drunken man re-entered the old chapel and clattered down the steps into the crypt. There, with a hatchet, he broke open a score of barrels, whose oily contents flooded the floor and flowed along the subterranean passage to the cave.

‘There’s enough oil here for a grand bonfire,’ he shouted. ‘I reckon there’s a fine through draught from here down to the tomb. Aye, it will be a bonny blaze; the cave will be a burning, fiery furnace; in the village they’ll be thinking they’re looking into hell.’

Meanwhile the preparations for the execution were completed. Still undaunted, Papoulos stood watching silently. When rough hands seized him, he demanded the services of a priest; he, who had always scoffed at religion, made this appeal to gain a little time. Some of his executioners were disposed to grant this last request, and Philip's name was mentioned.

'Yes, Brother Philip, the good monk Philip,' cried the Greek eagerly, 'let him be with me before I die.'

A voice answered — 'Brother Philip is not here. He has gone to the Promontory to fetch your daughter, the witch who killed John's mother with her spells. The monk has gone to bring her back to us.'

At these tidings, the expression on the face of Papoulos became so terrible that those who held him in their grasp shrank from him. He made a desperate effort to escape, was caught and carried, struggling like a wild cat, to the tree. The noose was fitted round his neck by eager hands; strong arms propelled his writhing form over the edge of what had seemed, a second earlier, a dark abyss. But now, from within the cave there issued flames, dense suffocating fumes, a fearful sound, half hiss, half roar.

Andrew had done his work.

A pillar of black smoke drifted across the garden towards the house, was broken by the wind, subsided in a viscous smother, only to be renewed, unceasingly, from within the crypt. The passage was a tube of flame fed by the fuel flowing from the broken barrels; while

S M A R A N D A

the contents of a hundred other barrels, unopened, closely packed, were vaporized in the terrific heat.

Then, suddenly, the whole bluff quaked, a yawning fissure opened, a river of red light appeared, widened, poured through the cave, and sucked into its fiery course the chapel, farm-house, ruined castle, garden and gallows tree.

At dawn, the villagers returned to find, where once the bluff had been, a blackened slope, still hot and smoking, but not a trace of human life.

Thus did Papoulos meet his death, and thus was he interred.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER IX    ∞    JOHN AND SALOMÉ



JOHN and his men rode rapidly along the track leading south from the town in the foothills. They had with them a wagon drawn by mules, in which were mattresses, rugs and cushions. For the first eight miles their way lay across the valley; but after passing a railway bridge they entered the mountainous area which terminates in the promontory. At the bridge, half the party was left to watch the road. The remainder, led by John, pursued their course southward until they reached a narrow defile. At the southern end of this defile the advanced detachment halted, and opened communication with the party at the bridge by means of signalling lamps. Night had already fallen.

While he waited for Salomé, John had ample food for meditation. Vague rumours had reached him describing her mode of life in the Palace by the Sea. He realized how everything had altered, politically as well as personally. Bulgaria's defeat had reduced him to a state of dependence on Papoulos; the thought of this rankled more than ever now, and his slow mind was perpetually revolving round some stroke whereby he could reverse the situation.

To do so it would be necessary, in the first place, to

get Salomé back, and, in the second, to establish himself as the leader of the outlaws in Western Thrace. Philip's mission was intended to achieve the first purpose; for the second, he had enlisted the support of Todor, the famous chief from Macedonia, with whose assistance he hoped to gain control over the Turkish as well as the Bulgarian 'Bands.' If he could then consolidate his position, recognition would soon follow. The history of Western Thrace abounded in precedents which justified this hope. As a man of importance, wielding power in the land, he would make Salomé, the proud and queenly, a sort of Queen.

From a hill-top near where his men were camped, he could see the Palace and the zone of light it cast upon the sea. He concluded that she must be there; the mansion would not be so brightly lit if only servants were in residence. He did not know that Papoulos had returned, but was surprised to see the yacht.

Three hours had passed when a message was received from the party at the bridge, reporting a body of Greek troops advancing by the track.

'How many and in what formation?' he signalled back.

'About one hundred, on foot, in column of route,' was the answer.

'Offer no opposition, clear off the road, conceal yourselves until the column has passed, then follow it and close the northern exit from the defile,' were his instructions.

The unsuspecting Greeks advanced; they were led

by an officer whose instructions were to take his company to the Palace on the promontory. He knew nothing about the nature of the country or guerilla warfare.

At the entrance to the defile were some sheep which scuttled before them as they approached. The shepherd came out of a cave and cursed them. In reply to a question from the officer, he shouted – ‘Go on, now that you have done the mischief, follow the sheep.’

The column had penetrated some two hundred yards into the defile, when a hail of bullets raked it from in front. So closely crowded were the soldiers that one bullet killed or wounded several. They halted in confusion, turned to flee, but their line of retreat was cut. Resistance was hopeless, and they surrendered at discretion.

‘What are your orders?’ John asked the officer.

‘To go to the Palace of Papoulos, the millionaire, and protect it against attack.’

‘No doubt you were looking forward to good quarters, and much wine and food.’

‘I was indeed,’ replied the young fellow ruefully.

‘Well, you need not trouble about the Palace, it will not be burnt or pillaged,’ John assured him.

The surviving Greek soldiers were disarmed and released. John told the officer that he had two hundred followers with him, that they were out of Eastern Thrace on a foraging expedition, and only asked to be left alone, adding that they had at least as much right as the Greeks to invade this district.

From the defile to the Palace the distance by the



shortest road is about five miles. John was now satisfied that there were no troops on the promontory, and decided to go there himself, taking a dozen picked men with him in case of resistance by the servants.

In little more than an hour's rapid marching, the party reached the mansion. The mountaineers measured with their eyes the high northern wall, noted the *chevaux de frise* along its top, examined the massive wooden door, and found the chain that hung down from the belfry.

'Ring the bell,' John ordered.

He was obeyed with a goodwill that bordered upon violence. The porter, an old Turk, peered through the peep-hole and asked who was without.

'Friends,' was the answer.

'Friends from where?'

'From the mountains.'

'Who would you see?' was the next question.

John replied - 'The daughter of Papoulos and the priest who came this afternoon.'

'My mistress is with her guests; as for the priest, I don't know where he is. I only let him in because he was a priest, as the people in this house call themselves Christians. This door is seldom opened and never after dark. Who are you?'

'I am the husband of your mistress and have a right to enter. Come, open quickly. There are men with me who will burst in this door and scale your wall if need be. But woe betide you, if they are forced to do so.'

During this colloquy the bell had not ceased clanging and servants had crowded into the courtyard.

Among them came Maria, scolding, saying the children would be roused from sleep. She ran to the door to vent her anger on the unwelcome visitor.

'Is that you, Maria?' It was John who spoke. 'How are the children? I have come to see them.'

Surprise silenced the old woman, then she screamed – 'Mr. John, Mr. John, what brings you here at this late hour? My mistress did not know . . .'

'Who is this man?' asked the porter.

'The husband of my mistress and the father of her children.'

'That's what he says he is, and he shall enter.'

The huge door was unbarred. John crossed the threshold, followed by his men, and, without let or hindrance, entered the Palace by the Sea.

When the intruders reached the central hall, they found three guests – the Levantine, the American and the man with the waxed moustache – holding counsel.

The Levantine spoke first; he claimed relationship with Papoulos and was acting host.

'Well, gentlemen, what can we do for you?' he said, with a forced smile that he tried to make ingratiating.

John looked past him at the American who was holding a revolver.

'Give that up,' he said curtly, 'I have twelve well-armed men with me.'

The American complied. There was nothing else to do.

'Good God!' cried the man with the waxed moustache, 'It's John, the son-in-law of Papoulos, and the real owner of the farm. Now we're in for trouble.'

'Are you the Englishman who wanted the concession for my quarries?' John asked him.

'Yes, yes, that's me. I'm from Yorkshire, and I only wish I'd never got mixed up in this dirty business. You've not had a square deal, that's sure enough. But what are you doing here?'

'I've come to fetch my wife. Where is she?'

'In the ballroom, I expect. But you can't take her away now, man. Her father will be here to-morrow. Come back then.'

'She shall come with me to-night. Who knows what may have happened by to-morrow.' Turning to the Levantine, John commanded - 'Show me where my wife, Salomé, is.'

A strange procession traversed a suite of sumptuous rooms to the western end of the building. The hill-men were wearing their national footgear of soft leather, and their feet made a muffled, padding sound on the polished floors. In these luxurious surroundings, they looked like jungle beasts in a formal garden. The Levantine went in front with John. Guests and flunkys made way deferentially for the intruder, with haggard face and blazing eyes, and ragged mud-stained garments, as though he were the master of the house.

The door of the ballroom was flung open, and John strode in, glanced swiftly round until his gaze rested on the French window at the farther end, through which, against the background of the night, he saw Salomé crouching by the wicket.

For a brief second, husband and wife stared full into each other's eyes. Then John leapt forward,

calling out – ‘Salomé, Salomé.’ But she shrank from him, and starting back, fell through the open gate.

Out of the depths there came a wailing cry; it rose into a shrill, ear-piercing shriek, and died away, as though a soul in torment, lost and forsaken, had been engulfed. The elemental strife without increased in violence, and the whole mansion quivered in the uproar of the gale.

★

John found the body of Salomé lying like sea-wrack on the rocks. Great waves submerged it, tossed it to and fro; their ebbing waters flecked the dusky hair, and streamed across the face and breast as white and luminous as Ægean foam. He fell on the inanimate form, gibbered fond words into unhearing ears, tried to breathe life through unresponsive lips, to warm the lifeless body with uncouth embraces, blindly refusing to believe that she was dead.

So the night passed. At dawn, John climbed the path between the myrtle hedges, bearing his dead wife in his arms. Maria stripped the body of its dress and jewels and wrapped it in a linen sheet. The hill-men made a bier of branches.

In storm and rain the funeral procession began its journey to the mountains. Gusts swept the promontory and moaned among the trees; the boom of breakers rose up from the sea and sank in muffled cadences. After that night of sin and retribution, the voices of Nature were no longer vengeful; they sounded immensely pitiful, and mourned in unison, attuned to the slow clanging of the bell.

# A TALE OF WESTERN THRACE

## CHAPTER X    ∞    THE HOSPICE



THE hospice where Philip lived is situated at the top of a lofty pass close to the main road leading north. After landing at the Little Port, the monk had hurried to this retreat by unfrequented by-paths, shunning a human company. During the day he made his preparations for departure, sorted out papers and wrote letters. At a late hour of the night, he was still seated at the table, reading his confession, addressed to the Exarch in Constantinople: —

YOUR BEATITUDE, —

I have betrayed the trust you put in me, and have sinned deeply with a woman, one of my flock, whose husband was my friend.

Anticipating your commands, I have laid down my charge, and am returning to the monastery where my first vows were taken, and whence you sent me forth believing I was chaste. It is not so; my carnal nature has not been subdued, and unfits me to hold office in the Church.

I crave your Beatitude's permission to go to Russia, and there become a member of the sect called 'Skoptsi.' I am too weak to lead a normal life, and can but hope

that by self-mutilation I may attain salvation in the end.

I have made certain dispositions of my property, which, as your Beatitude well knows, is considerable and mainly invested in America. One half I give to the man I have deceived; it may enable him to start afresh in the New World. The other half goes to the Church, to help the suffering and needy in this distracted land.

Father, I implore your prayers for an erring brother from whom you expected much, too much. . . .

Further perusal was interrupted by some one knocking at the door. The monk went hastily to open it, and found Maria with the sons of John and Salomé.

'Ah, Father Philip, it is good to see you,' cried the old woman. 'Where have you been? Mr. John sent me here to find a shelter for the children.'

'John sent you? Where is he now?' the monk inquired.

'Back on the road, by the farm, with my dead mistress. Ah me! Ah me! What sorrow . . .'

'Salomé dead! How dead? Since when?'

The monk reeled as though struck by a bullet, and would have fallen had not Maria held him up. Then, huddled in a chair, he heard the story with bowed head, not daring to show his face. At length he asked —

'Is John coming?'

'Yes, he is coming. He wants you to bury her up here. He told me if I found you to make a signal fire, and when he saw it he would follow with the corpse.'

'Maria,' said Philip, rising from his seat, 'I cannot

stay here and meet John. Another monk is coming from the monastery, early to-morrow; he will perform the funeral rites. The Exarch has sent for me and I must leave this place at once.' Going to the table, he took up an envelope and continued – 'Give this to John; it contains papers of importance.'

After a pause, he added – 'I did not know that Salomé was dead when I wrote; but perhaps it is as well. Now let us make the signal fire.'

Outside the hospice, to the west, the ground slopes upwards to a level space. Here, it is said, there once had been a temple to Jupiter. Large stones are ranged in a rough semi-circle, and outside it stands what might have been the sacrificial altar. On this the monk, assisted by Maria, heaped up dry wood and logs.

After the storm the night was calm and clear, lit by a waning moon. Along the horizon to the north and west, cloud castles swam on vaporous table-lands, dissolving, reappearing in fantastic shapes, crowned with white splendour, infinitely far. To the south, a red glow as from a furnace shone above the quarries, whence came tumultuous sounds. The Bulgarian Comitadjis were destroying the property of Papoulos. Hundreds of drunken men were dancing with the women from the village, exulting in victory and vengeance, holding a modern Bacchic orgy, and revelling by the light of burning oil among the midnight hills.

In the village darkness reigned. The wide valley-bottom seemed to be covered with a dark green velvet carpet; beyond it rose the wooded ridge, protruding

from the blackness of the mountains, a giant tentacle thrust out across the coastal plain.

Philip looked for the last time at the promontory, then he approached the pyre and kindled the dry wood. Smoke floated skyward, sparks showered all around; the fire spread and climbed in sudden leaps, flames licked the logs, expelled their moisture in clouds of hissing steam, enfolded the dried wood and fed on it like a devouring beast. The blaze soared high; to shepherds and peasants on remote hill-sides this fiery beacon appeared a portent; even the dwellers in the coast towns marvelled; never before had they perceived an antique altar flaming on the heights.

But now Maria and the children were alone upon the summit. Philip had disappeared. They called to him, and from the darkness no answer came.

John blessed the signal from his friend, and the funeral cortège resumed its march. The hill-men crooned a song of love and death, bearing to burial the body of Salomé, the Greek girl whom their leader had loved greatly, so greatly that, although a Bulgar, he had taken her to wife.



## COMPILER'S NOTE

The 'Tale of Western Thrace' was Y—'s last literary effort. After returning to England from the Monastery of Rilo, the change in him went on apace, and by the end of the year 1923, scarcely a remnant of his former self remained. Occasionally he rallied, as for example on Christmas Day, 1923, when he wrote what he really thought about the European situation and shocked a number of respectable and worthy people. Again, on the very eve of his decease he committed a blazing indiscretion — a speech of his on Balkan topics caused quite a flutter; though those who knew anything about this subject declared that what he said was true.

Y—'s final exit from the scene occurred on January 23, 1924.<sup>1</sup> According to a custom not yet obsolete, he was arrayed in a black frock-coat, an ancient garment he had ceased to wear for years. *Æsop*, the slave who rose to be the Counsellor of a King, put on his manacles and rags when by himself he meditated laws. Y—'s symbolism took another form: to him, this sable mantle symbolized discretion; it put a strait-waistcoat on his ideas and wrapped the old Adam in a shroud.

<sup>1</sup>PUBLISHER'S NOTE.—It was on this day that the first Labour Ministry of Great Britain assumed office.

